

Josephine
The
GREAT
LOVER
N. P. Negel of





JOSEPHINE
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JOSEPHINE
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JOSEPHINE
THE GREAT LOVER

Pierre Nezelof

TRANSLATED BY
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Illustrated

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First Part



Y E Y E T T E





Prophecy

A MORNING IN THE ISLANDS

A STARTLING PREDICTION

Two negroes, patient and motionless as statues, waited in front of a house shaded by tamarind trees. From bamboo poles resting on their shoulders hung a white silk hammock, its bright feathers and plumes waving in the breeze.

"Mistress, mistress," called an enormous, flat-nosed mulatto, impatiently, "the bell is ringing."

"I'm coming, I'm coming, nurse dear," said a young girl who just then came out of the house. She was about fifteen years old. She was dressed in white muslin; a brilliant bandanna was around her head. She was of medium height; her figure was already ripening. Her skin was unusually white, and her dark blue, almost violet eyes, under their long, curly lashes, were vividly alive.

"You get there—mass all over," grumbled the mulatto, Marion. "M. le Curé—he not like."

Though she did not answer, the girl smiled, indifferently, as she circled a flower bed and casually seated herself in the hammock, the negress helping her affectionately.

"You all right, mistress? Not too hot? Not too tightly laced?"

"Everything's splendid, nurse. Come on. Let's go."

The two negroes began to move, Marion following, her hands crossed on her stomach. After crossing a stream the little cortège followed the village street. The early morning was disturbed by the screaming of monkeys and perroquets in the tops of cacao trees, a hundred feet above, where, too, birds of paradise disported themselves. Between the rows of palmettos the dark blue sky appeared, transparent as crystal, and a faint but insistent noise could be heard. This came from the sea, unfolding itself on the far side of the hill, although they could not see it.

The little Creole had apparently gone back to sleep, so motionless did she lie in the hammock, her face partly hidden by her arm. The road they were now climbing was lined with coffee bushes, banana trees and waving sugar cane. A fresh breeze came to rustle the plumes of the hammock. Below, through the cabins of the village, the tower of the chapel could be seen, and beyond it the blue sheen of the brilliant ocean.

Suddenly the young girl started. An old Indian woman, crouched at the foot of a mango tree, singing an old mala-pœia, had sprung up, her hand stretched out.

"Oh, but you frightened me!" cried the girl.

"Pity me, mistress! Me old. Give the old woman a few pennies."

The girl then took some change from her purse and dropped a small coin in the outstretched hand.

"You good!" cried the old Carib, turning her toothless mouth and her fanatical eyes upon the young girl. "Some day God will requite you, Me, too, I will do so now. I will tell you a good fortune."

Taking the little white hand that lay along the edge of the hammock, the old Indian looked at its palm for a

moment. Slowly, as if suddenly afraid, she lifted her head and looked timidly into the girl's face. Then she prostrated herself in the dust.

"Oh, you great lady one day," she cried. "Rich — powerful — many slaves — you be queen — more than queen — oh, yes —"

"Queen?" said the incredulous girl, questioningly.

"Yes, and more — all over people pay tribute to you — and gold. Yes, more than queen, yes — one day."

"But tell me — will I get married?"

The old Carib closed her eyes for a moment.

"Yes — I see love — much love. You be happy. Still, you cry, too. Yes, men — many men. But above all one man — oh, how he will love you!"

As if dazzled, the old woman covered her eyes with her hands.

"Thank you," cried the little Creole, as she threw the old Indian another coin.

The little retinue recommenced its gentle, easy progress. But now, as they neared the chapel, the faithful could be seen coming out.

"You see, mistress!" grumbled Marion. "I told you — the mass — all done. Now we got to go back, and oh — what will M. le Curé say?"

It was as if the young girl had not heard. Suddenly she burst out laughing.

"You heard what she just said, Marion? A queen! Do you see me being a queen? She's only an old idiot!"

Marion's expression was serious all at once, almost scandalized.

"You, mistress — don't laugh at that. Those women see far. They know many things — more than us. Who knows?"

You beautiful enough to be a queen — oh, surely —”

But the little Creole no longer heard the rhythm of the swaying hammock as she was borne homeward. It was not hope of being a queen that was in her heart now; she was not regretting the mass that she had missed; still less was she worrying about the priest and the scolding she might expect from him. Her eyes half closed, like one sucking perfumed sweets, she was repeating to herself the exciting and mysterious prediction: “Much love! Much love!”



At Trois Ilets

THE CHILDHOOD OF YEYETTE — AT SCHOOL
RETURN TO HOME

S_{HE} had been baptized Marie-Joseph Rose Tascher de la Pagerie, but every one knew her as Yeyette. Her parents owned a small plantation at Trois Ilets, in Martinique, on the other side of the bay on which Fort-Royal stands; a plantation worked by about a score of slaves.

When she was born, in 1763, her father had just returned from a campaign against the English, who, at the time, were gradually becoming the masters of the West Indies. When he laid down his arms he professed himself eager for peace and the life of a bourgeois. But he was scarcely ever at Trois Ilets. His love for play and a lively taste for ladies of color led him to prefer a residence at Fort-Royal, or, better still, at St.-Lucia, where he had some property and the rank of captain of dragoons in the militia.

Moreover, life at the house lacked gayety. Madame de la Pagerie vegetated dismally there, the prey of a thousand domestic worries. The family was not rich. A few years after Yeyette's birth a cyclone had nearly destroyed the manor house, and the family had been obliged to take

refuge in the sugar house and make shift to arrange rooms there. With no money, a philandering and spendthrift husband, together with bad health, Madame de la Pagerie had more to contend with than was needed to break down a lady of those islands.

Still, Yeyette was not unhappy. She only came home to sleep at night, as an animal returns to its lair. She lived out of doors, in that lovely land where the mild climate enabled her to dispense with clothes and was generous in providing marvelous fruits to feed her.

All day long, under Marion's eye, she played with her two younger sisters and little Alexandre de Beauharnais, whose father, the Marquis, the former governor of Martinique, had left him in the care of Madame de la Pagerie when he returned to Europe.

As Alexandre was the oldest it was he who directed their games, and under his leadership the whole troop was always wandering under the shade of the tamarinds and cacao trees, or swimming in the little river, or going, when it was too hot to play, to listen to the fantastic stories of some old teller of legendary tales. So the years passed for Yeyette in an enchanted land which a liberal nature created about her — until the day came when Alexandre, recalled by his parents, sailed for France.

Yeyette grew older, and with the years there grew in her a taste for finery, a longing for rustling Madras silks and jewelry. Merchants sometimes came to Trois Ilets, bringing rare materials from distant and mysterious lands, gold rings, brilliant gems. She would have liked to buy these treasures, to steal them, even, to take them away and have them for her own, to play with them, eat them, sleep with them. But she had to be satisfied

to look at them from afar, having no money to pay for them.

Saddened, she found compensations where she could. An hibiscus flower in her hair, a necklace of colored beads, a set of mother-of-pearl shells, afforded her a momentary consolation. Sitting on a basalt rock in midstream, she saw herself mirrored in the water, smiled or pouted at herself, studied some graceful step of a dance.

She liked to dance the "biguine" or the "caleinda" with the slaves at dusk, under the tamarinds. Crowned with flowers, dressed in white, she loved to join in the games of the Indians. The contrast of her white skin with the darkness of the negresses appealed to her taste for sharp nuances and gratified, as well, her love of adulation. They all made a circle about her twinkling feet, they copied her slightest gestures, and the admiration she saw in their eyes made her forget her poverty.

When she was ten years old Madame de la Pagerie began to give thought to her education. The school of the Ladies of Providence at Fort-Royal was not so well known as the convent of the Ursulines at St.-Pierre, but it was much cheaper, and there she spent five years. She learned a little music, how to write, and good manners. Two or three times a week she went to see her grandmother, Madame Tascher, who lived in the town. The rules of the convent were not strict, and there was little chaperonage.

When she was fifteen her parents decided that she had learned enough, so she returned to Trois Ilets. She had gone away a child; it was a young lady who came back.

She was unrecognizable. Secretive and languid, she

now sought only for solitude. She could be happy for hours looking at the sunlit ocean, or at the moonlight. Often, too, beside a stream, far out of sight, she would undress, and she felt a strange emotion in caressing her skin, which, though a little coarse in texture, was firm and brilliant, and in studying the growth of her body, in which, as in a clarifying mystery, a shadow grew, from year to year, more clearly discernible.

It is easy to imagine what delightful memories of peace, of utter bodily happiness, those long afternoon hours of languor stored up in her for the later years. Lying on a cool piece of matting or in a hammock, she gave her thoughts up to the most entrancing reveries. Monkeys sported above her in the tops of palms waving against the deep blue of the sky. Birds flashed by like tongues of flame. At her feet, adoring her, Marion crooned a lullaby.

Sometimes she shook off her lassitude, took her guitar, and sang to her own accompaniment. Then came time for a meal, and the nurse went to look for food. Like a gourmande, Yeyette would feast upon sweetmeats, guava jelly, a paste of frangipane, or would sink her teeth voluptuously in a ripe and creamy mango.

"Marion," she would then say, "Marion, talk to me. Tell me the story of the beautiful tiger who died for love of the pink perroquet."

And Marion, in her broken patois, would recount the fairy tale, while Yeyette listened, her eyes sparkling. Then, blushing, she would say: "Marion, tell me my fortune, will you?"

Yielding, the negress spread an old pack of cards on the sand. With closed eyes the young girl listened as Marion drew for her, from the future, a rich and impas-

sioned young man, tender words, dreamlike dresses, a whole life made up of love and festivities.

"More, Marion, more," she would plead.

For a long time the mulatto questioned the cards with her dark finger. Her voice sounded now clear, now hollow and remote. At last she rose. In the hammock Yeyette had fallen asleep, her lips, half open, smiling at the great dream, born in the heart of an humble slave, that lay before her.



An Idyl

AN AGREEABLE ENCOUNTER

CAPTAIN TERCIER — A CANOE RIDE — FIRST CARESSES

A STRANGE SIGHT

DRESSED in a conspicuously cut riding habit, mounted on a Porto Rican pony, Yeyette was taking her morning ride. She was descending the hill at her steed's usual pace, meaning to turn toward the sea, when, abruptly, she pulled up her rein. The pony stopped. Below, a man on horseback appeared before her. Who was he? Visitors were rare at Trois Ilets. Still, even at that distance, she could see that he was in uniform. Slowly he approached. Her heart leaped.

"Oh — Captain Tercier!" she whispered.

Now he saluted her.

"You, Mademoiselle Rose!" he said. "How lucky I am to meet you!"

He took her hand, and now he kissed her little, shell-like nails. Much moved, Yeyette forgot to withdraw her hand. Captain Tercier looked at her, plainly intrigued.

"Oh, Mademoiselle," he said, "if you could only know how unhappy I was to learn that you had left Fort-Royal! I could not believe it. I've planned a score of times to come

here — I dared not! You're not angry with me for coming at last — ?”

“Oh, no!” she replied, cheerfully. “It certainly is not very exciting here. Papa is never home, Mamma is always depressed — my sisters are still small.”

He listened to the lisping accents of her voice, slipping over the r's, and it was like sweet music to him.

“Will you let me ride a little way with you?” he asked, humbly.

She answered only with a smile; in a moment they were riding side by side. Yeyette was flushed with surprise and pleasure.

Captain Tercier! How that name had made her heart beat! He was an officer in the regiment of Martinique, whom she had met several times during her stay at Fort-Royal, after mass in the cathedral; he had waited, sometimes, to offer her holy water. He had come, too, occasionally, to circle under her window and toss her flowers, at school. Once even — she wondered by what plotting, what seeking of introductions, he had managed it — she had found him at her grandmother's, at a family dinner. After dinner, when they had played games, he had made her redeem a forfeit with a kiss. Closing her eyes she had held up her face to him, and in her dreams she could still feel, like an exquisite pang, the first touch of a man's lips on the very corner of her mouth.

And now, here he was, beside her! He had actually remembered little Yeyette of Fort-Royal! With concealed pride the little creole looked at this horseman, so proudly turned out, who must have ridden half the night just to see her!

“Mademoiselle Rose,” he said, “this day in which I

have found you again will always be among the happiest of my life. Please don't let it be the last. Let me come again — you will make me so unhappy if you refuse!"

She gave him her hand, as a sign of acquiescence. He was pale; he trembled because of the favor she was promising him.

She saw him again the next day, and, thereafter, he made it a practice to come and wait for her almost every day at the foot of the hill, where they had first met. Now Yeyette never set out for her ride without anxiety. "Will he be there?" she asked herself. The officer's coming was needed to make her life happy.

Every day they lengthened their ride a little. So they went far and high up on the mountain, seeking flowers and fruits that did not grow in the valleys. Tercier, as a companion, was always gay and deferential. To be sure, he did allow himself certain familiarities. Already the hand she offered him was not enough; he encroached upon her arm, with an obvious end in his mind, and when he helped her to mount, or to cross a brook, he did, perhaps, hold her a little tighter in his arms than was quite necessary. But these tributes by no means displeased Yeyette.

Finally, one morning, he said:

"Rose, my dear little Rose, don't you find these rides a little monotonous? How would you like to take a trip on the bay in a canoe to-morrow evening? You'll agree that I can paddle very well."

He looked at her fixedly, a curious gleam in his eyes.

"I don't know," she stammered. "Mamma wouldn't like me to go out alone like that —"

Yet, in spite of everything, she was tempted. She wanted to go with him, far from shore, be beside him,

rocked by the waves, while he whispered in her ears words she had never heard before she met him.

"Your mother? But you needn't tell her. She'll know nothing about it. Come — just for an hour — two at the most! The time will pass so quickly! I'll bring you back at dark. Tell me, Rose dear — you'd like to go? You're not afraid of me, are you?"

She gave him a mischievous, sidelong glance.

"Afraid? You don't seem very terrible, captain — at least to your friends!"

He didn't answer her, but an odd smile wrinkled one nostril and revealed a sharp tooth.

Back in the house Yeyette went to find her nurse.

"Marion, I'm going for a ride in a canoe on the bay to-morrow evening. Don't say a word to mamma."

"Are you going all alone?"

"No. With Captain Tercier. You'll go with me to the shore — won't you?"

The mulatto, much disturbed, looked at her.

"With the captain? Listen, mistress, he's not the man for you, he's a bad flirt. Pay attention to me, mistress. Don't go with him. Trust Marion."

"Marion, listen — I didn't ask for your advice. He's coming to-morrow on purpose. You wouldn't want me not to be there?"

The nurse, sighing, was silent.

Tercier, seeing her coming, hurried to meet her.

"Rose — little Rose! How good of you to keep your promise! We're going to have fine weather. The sun is going down. We shan't be too warm."

He kept talking idly as he led her to a canoe floating

below the rocks. He helped her aboard, and surrounded her with cushions.

"Now you are as comfortable as a little queen!"

He took the paddle, and the canoe slipped gently away from shore. From the beach Marion watched the frail craft moving away, a small, white figure sitting in it, very straight and still. Opposite her, the captain plied his paddle skillfully, watching her with greedy eyes. The mulatto couldn't make up her mind to go away. Unusually agitated she walked up and down, obstinately repeating, as she shook her head until the metal rings in her ears jangled mournfully:

"All that is bad — it's wrong for my mistress."

Once in the middle of the cove Tercier steered toward a point of land.

"Where are you taking us?" asked Yeyette, in surprise.

"I found a little inlet yesterday — a real retreat for lovers. Would you like me to show it to you?"

Without waiting for her answer he steered toward a grove of mango trees which, planted beside the water, spread their branches over the sea. The canoe was caught among the low branches, so that they found themselves, all at once, in a green grotto, isolated from the world. She clapped her hands.

"Oh, but it's nice and cool here!" she cried.

"Let's rest," said Tercier. "Lie down in the boat, Rose, why don't you?"

She followed his suggestion. As he stood up to help her the canoe rocked, dangerously, and he fell on his knees beside her and seized her in his arms.

"I was frightened," he said, "but if you'd fallen overboard I would have rescued you!"

Slyly he slipped down beside her.

"See how comfortable we are now!" he said. Laughing, he added: "One might almost think it was a bridal chamber!"

She flushed at that idea. For the first time she was uneasy with Tercier. Yet her feeling was not wholly unpleasant — nor without a certain curiosity. He drew still nearer; she felt his warm breath on her cheek. Then, all at once, turning away, as if he were angry, he asked her, in a voice she scarcely knew for his:

"Rose — tell me — have you ever loved any one before?"

"Why — why, no! What do you mean?" she stammered.

"Didn't that Englishman who made love to you at Fort-Royal, when you were with your grandmother, mean anything to you?"

She laughed, amused by such an idea.

"An Englishman! How could one love an Englishman in the Islands?"

"He boasted of his conquest of you."

"Well — what has that to do with you?"

"How can you ask me that! Rose — I love you —"

He had put his arm about her, and now he drew her close. He talked to her for a long time, in a strange, heavy voice, protesting his love for her, telling her how much he desired her. His words were ardent; they inflamed the inexperienced girl. She listened, with closed eyes, her head swimming, enchanted.

First she felt his lips on her forehead. They touched her eyelids like a flower; then, all at once, they were on her own. For a moment she resisted; then, vanquished,

she yielded her mouth. . . . Tercier never stopped speaking. She didn't understand all he was saying, nor all that he sought from her. But one of his promises arrested her attention.

"Rose, my dear little Rose, you will see how I shall spoil you! I have a ruby necklace for you, diamond earrings, a gold bracelet —"

A necklace — diamonds — a bracelet — for her? Was it possible?

He held her tighter; his kisses grew more imperative.

"Darling, you'll come again to-morrow, won't you? But alone — without Marion?"

One of his hands slipped under the "gaule" of muslin that covered her bosom; he stroked her breasts. She pillowed her head on his shoulder, and, sunk in a dreamy ecstasy, she sighed, gently, without the strength to make a forbidding gesture.

"No — no, my dear — this isn't right. We must go back — look — it's nearly dark."

The sun sank swiftly, as it does in the tropics, swallowed by the horizon. The sea turned from violet to a blue black; already the moon was silvering the water. Tercier tore himself away; pushed the canoe from its shelter, and, in silence, his teeth clenched, paddled toward the shore.

"Till to-morrow, then, darling," he said, as he left her. "Till to-morrow —"

He no longer made requests; he gave orders. Once more he embraced her; drank deep of her mouth. Overcome, she stammered:

"Yes — yes — I will come —"

Trembling, she bowed her head, not daring to look

at him. He dominated her with his fiery eyes — eyes that had become like those of a wild beast.

Swaying, almost fainting, she went back to the house. The hours that had just passed weighed upon her happily, but disturbingly. Had she been wrong to go off alone in that fashion with Captain Tercier? What was this happiness that he had promised her? What did he want? She did not understand very clearly what he sought from her. But her whole body was possessed by languor. . . .

She was nearly at the sugar-house when a noise made her stop. It came from a grove of wild fig trees. Puzzled, she approached it, stealthily, and gently pushed the foliage aside. In the dusk she saw two bodies lying on the grass. Ah! It was the negro, Vercingetorix and Mary Stuart, the mulatto. What were they doing there? What strange rite was this that they were celebrating? They were nude, and they were engaged in what seemed a struggle to the death.

Yeyette wanted to run away, but a mysterious power chained her to the spot, forced her to look on, her heart in her mouth, as the two mingled bodies struggled, to stare at the play of their eager muscles, made tense by some strange need. . . .

The two slaves groaned, panted, rolled in a frenzy on the ground. Yeyette could see only the girl's face. It was submissive to the violence of her companion; her eyes were closed, her nostrils trembled, her features were transfigured by a look of delight that made her almost beautiful.

Suddenly a beam of moonlight fell on the man's face. Yeyette repressed a cry. In the eyes of the negro, Vercingetorix, she had just recognized the same passionate and voracious gleam that, a little while ago, had inflamed Captain Tercier's eyes as he stared at her. . . .



Betrothal

A MYSTERIOUS LETTER — A PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE
SHALL YEYETTE BE CHOSEN? — THE DEPARTURE
THE CROSSING

WHAT was going on at Trois Ilets? For days all there had lived in an atmosphere of bewilderment and agitation. What an extraordinary change!

In the autumn of 1777 death had entered the house, and its pall still lingered. Two months earlier Josephine's younger sister, Catherine-Desirée had died from a malignant fever. Every one had wept a great deal—but M. de la Pagerie had used the occasion as an excuse for going to St.-Lucia to seek consolation. But Josephine, who had stayed at home, had led a very mournful life, between her carefree little sister Manette, and the sorrow of her tearful and moaning mother.

Now M. de la Pagerie was back, and one day a sailor brought him some letters. The mail from France had come. What news would it bring? In those days the arrival of the European post was always something to upset the whole household for hours.

Usually, as soon as M. de la Pagerie had read the letters, he would read them again, aloud, to the assembled family. But this time, his forehead wrinkled, he put them

in his pocket, and, beckoning to his wife, took her off to confer with her secretly in his room — and this conference lasted a long time. Moreover, it was repeated the next day, and for several days thereafter, and at the table Monsieur and Madame de la Pagerie ate without speaking. Both were preoccupied; their thoughts were elsewhere. Clearly, the mail had brought news of real importance.

Intrigued, Josephine tried to discover what all the mystery was about. She listened carefully, hoping to overhear something that would give her a hint; she watched the expression of her parents' faces. Once she heard her name, in a whispered conversation. So — all this did have something to do with her! Her excitement and curiosity were redoubled.

At last, after dinner one night, Madame de la Pagerie said, very soberly, to her daughters: "Stay, children. I have something to talk to you about. I received a letter not long ago from your aunt, Madame Renaudin, and another from the Marquis de Beauharnais who, as you know, used to be governor of this island a few years ago. Now, M. de Beauharnais asks the hand of your sister, Catherine-Desirée, for his son, Alexandre. You remember Alexandre, who was brought up with you until he was nine years old? Two months ago, when M. de Beauharnais wrote his letter, he did not know that your sister was dead."

She paused.

"The poor child — how happy she would have been!" she ended, wiping away a tear.

M. de la Pagerie sighed, dutifully, and took up the tale.

"We never hoped for such a proposal," he said. "The Marquis is very rich, and he has excellent connections at

Court. Happily, though Catherine-Desirée is gone, we have other children, so we will think of them. Your mother and I have decided to invite M. le Marquis to choose between you, Manette, and you, Rose-Josephine, and I have written to tell him so."

Little eleven-year-old Manette looked at her mother with eyes in which astonishment was mingled with fear. But Josephine showed no such qualms.

"Yes, my darlings," said Madame de la Pagerie, "it is so. Your Aunt Renaudin will be very happy if such a marriage is arranged. The young man, she tells me, is very attractive, with a charming face, an excellent figure, and he is clever. All the good qualities of mind and heart are united in him, he is loved by every one around him. Also, which does no harm, he is one of the handsomest officers in the King's army."

Before she went to sleep that night Josephine, her heart beating wildly, repeated, for about the hundredth time:

"He is loved by every one around him. . . . A handsome officer in the King's army."

Week followed week. What a long time the answer took in coming! Josephine lived in a fever of impatience. Would she be the chosen one? Each night, in her prayers, she begged the Virgin that it might be so. It was such a miraculous chance that lay before her! Not to have to be married in the Islands to some rich Colonial, worn out and rough, even if he were well born—but to be chosen, instead, by a French seigneur, to have to cross the ocean to join him, to live with him in a castle, to appear at Court, to be seen among beautiful women, covered with jewels

and laces, in the midst of fêtes and constant adulation!

She often thought with gratitude of her lovely Aunt Renaudin, whom she had never seen, but who, far away, was striving for her happiness. They said that her aunt was on the best of terms with the Marquis de Beauharnais, so, surely, there was hope!

And this hope was soon concentrated upon her. M. de la Pagerie had gone again to St.-Lucia and had again returned. Her little sister, Marie-Françoise, had fallen ill, suddenly, a victim of the fever, and Josephine's mother, thinking of the recent death of Catherine-Desirée, was terrified.

"No, my darling," she said to Manette, "I don't want you to go so far away from me. That long trip would be fatal, my dearest. Tell your father you do not want to leave me — I will bear you out."

Manette, well coached, promised to obey her mother.

"You, Rose-Josephine," said Madame de la Pagerie, "you shall go to France. It will be you who gets married, you who are nearly grown up. You think that is best, too, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, Mother — I will do as you wish," Josephine murmured submissively, and lowered her eyes to hide her secret delight.

The answer from the Marquis de Beauharnais came at last. He deplored the death of little Catherine-Desirée, but accepted the offer of one of her sisters in her place. Could M. de la Pagerie start immediately with his two daughters? Then, when they reached France, he and his son could make the choice between Manette and Rose-Josephine.

"My friend — you must start at once!" said Madame

de la Pagerie to her husband. "Think of what an unhopedor chance this is to marry one of your daughters! The Marquis does not ask for a dot — just that she have a small income, while we keep the principal. Alexandre himself has an income from his revenues of 40,000 livres! This voyage must be made!"

But M. de la Pagerie lifted his hands to heaven in horror.

"Cross the ocean?" he cried. "At my age — in my state of health? My dear, can you be serious in suggesting such a thing? I wouldn't live to reach France!"

It was true that he had been ailing of late, looking jaundiced and morose.

"Exactly!" said Madame. "But, Gaspard, what a fortunate opportunity for you to consult some good doctors in Paris!"

"Yes, yes — but, my friend, you know that we haven't the means to risk such an expedition!"

And here was an objection which even Madame de la Pagerie's cleverness could not meet. Her husband's cash box had long been empty, and financial embarrassment had reigned at Trois Ilets for a long time. The family had lived, so long that no one could remember a happier state of things, from day to day. Always it had been a case of hoping for a good year, a good crop — and a good sale — of coffee and sugar.

So M. de la Pagerie had to compromise by explaining to the Marquis, in a long epistle, his vexations and his reasons for deferring a journey on which, none the less, as he made plain, the happiness of one of his two remaining children depended. And Josephine was obliged again

to take up a life of uncertainty, divided always between hope and despair.

"No, nurse," she would say. "It won't ever happen."

But: "Me have hope," Marion would reply, stubbornly. "You be great lady one day. Marion knows—Marion not lie."

And, to support her predictions she would consult the coffee grounds in the cups, which gave the most comforting reassurances.

Josephine no longer thought of Captain Tercier. As soon as it was a question of her marrying she dared not go to meet him again for clandestine rendezvous, and, to tell the truth, after the recent excitement, his attraction for her had faded.

"Be careful," Marion had warned her, repeatedly, "he bad man for you."

He had come, for a number of days after their canoe trip, and had waited in vain at the bottom of the hill; then, greatly vexed, had ceased to appear.

Josephine now no longer had any desire to sing or play the guitar; she even lost her appetite. The sorrow and anxiety of her heart weighed down her nervous, restless body. She spent long hours by the sea, dreaming, because it seemed to her that it held the secret of her future. She took interest now only in the movements of the winged ships, that were either coming from or going to France; it was as if each one of them might hold within it a little part of her destiny.

Now came a disquieting letter from Mme. Renaudin that threw the family into a panic. Pale and shaking Mme. de la Pagerie explained it to her husband.

"Do you see, now, my friend?" she said. "Your sister

says that the Marquis is trying to arrange an advantageous marriage for his son. If we do not hurry they will cut the grass from under our feet! You must sail, Gaspard! Mme. Renaudin will help — she says she will act as chaperon for Rose-Josephine and provide her with her trousseau — so that from that angle, at least, you can be reassured."

"But, my dear," said M. de la Pagerie, with a groan, "do you not realize that we are at war with the English? Their cruisers haunt the Islands. If they do not sink our ship they will make prisoners of us."

"Come, my friend — a little boldness! Who knows but that your negligence now may compromise Yeyette's whole future? Let me tell you that this is not the behavior of a father eager to see his children well settled in life! Moreover, you, too, you, yourself, will gain a good deal from this trip to France."

M. de la Pagerie was beaten. Reluctantly, he gave in, and immediately took steps to find a ship in which the voyage might be made with some measure of security. And he learned that before long a convoy was to leave Martinique, under the escort of a ship of the line able to beat off the British cruisers that preyed upon French commerce.

So preparations were hurriedly made, and on a September morning in 1779 Josephine, her father, Rosette Tascher and Euphemie, a negro maid, boarded the *Ile de France*, a monkey and some cages of birds being part of their paraphernalia.

The crossing was long and full of alarms. Once well at sea the *Ile de France* ran into stormy weather, but she was a stout ship and rode the squalls out well. M. de la

Pagerie was a wretched sailor and was ill all the time; he never left his cabin; and naturally wanted Josephine to stay with him. He nearly lost his mind at each roll of the ship, and at the least unusual noise he sprang up, crying: "The English! My God—we are lost! Rose—go quickly, and see!" It was with difficulty that she calmed him.

He begged her to stay with him; monotonously, day after day, he told her his plans.

"First I will see the doctors—real doctors," he would say. "I have the names of a number of good ones. All the doctors at Martinique are asses, who know nothing about my disease. Those in Paris will cure me. When my health is restored I will go to see the King." He paused, and sighed. "The King! He does not know his good servants, but he will listen to me. I am bringing him irrefutable proofs. He will see what I have done, he will do me justice and load me with honors. He will increase my pension, and we will be able to live in comfort."

Often he spoke of his sister, with tears in his eyes.

"You will see how sweet your Aunt Renaudin is, Rose," he would say, "and how devoted to her family. But you must not be astonished to find her living with the Marquis de Beauharnais. She is eccentric—she looks after him. They should marry, of course, but they are waiting until certain family matters are settled."

Josephine only half listened to his talk. She would much rather have been on the poop, with the ship's officers making a fuss over her, especially the captain, a good looking man in knee breeches, buckled shoes and a tricorne hat, who kissed her hand as if she were grown up, and lent her his binoculars to scan the horizon.

The days passed slowly. Little by little the travelers left behind them the hot sky and the soft, transparent air of the tropics, though Josephine seemed scarcely to notice this. Her shawls covered her frivolously; seated, whenever she was free, high in the ship's bow, she turned her eyes avidly toward the east.

How slowly the days dragged past! She was in such a hurry to see once more the fiancé who had already become so dear to her. She thought of the little boy she had known, a sweet child with a changeable disposition and a meek smile. She tried to imagine what he would be like when she saw him again. No! She would not be disappointed! He would certainly be like her dreams.

At times she was the prey of apprehension. Suppose in two years, he had become bored by waiting for a fiancée so far away? Suppose she found his ardor chilled? An officer — she knew a few things — captured hearts so easily!

Second Part



MADAME DE BEAUHARNAIS



Marriage

ARRIVAL AT BREST — THE FIRST SPARK

RETURN TO PARIS — PREPARATIONS

HONEYMOON AND APRIL MOON — PREGNANT

A FLYAWAY HUSBAND

SITTING at a table in an inn a young captain was writing a letter. He was not inspired; he hesitated; scratched out what he wrote, rumbled the paper, bit the end of his pen.

"Oh, but it is difficult!" he sighed. "Why the devil do they want to marry me off?"

But at last, nerving himself, as one does when one is about to dive into cold water, he made a real start and wrote his letter before he paused.

"My dear Father," he wrote. "I have just had the great happiness of being presented to Mademoiselle de la Pagerie. She is less beautiful than you think, but I can, I believe, assure you that the sweetness and honesty of her character exceed all that has been told to you!"

Young Alexandre de Beauharnais read over what he had written; he smiled with pleasure at its phrasing.

"Not bad!" he said, to himself. "Ardent — but Monsieur my father will see evidences that my taste is sound, and that my judgment, though young, is not to be carried away by a consuming and dangerous passion!"

He folded the letter and put it away; then, as if about to lead an assault on a bastion, he exclaimed: "And now we will go and find our fiancée!"

A week earlier he had been at Noisy with his father and Madame Renaudin, recovering from an attack of bronchitis incurred on active service. He had been allowing himself to be nursed, idling, and, generally, finding life very pleasant. He had been looking forward to his approaching marriage calmly, with no thought of doing anything to prevent the occurrence. His fiancée had been far away. To reach him she had to cross the ocean, escape the English. The risks had seemed great—for her. Moreover, to tell the truth concerning his feelings, this marriage had seemed to him one that would tie him down very little and offer him definite compensations besides. He would be rid of his father's guardianship, and the disposition of his money would be in his own hands.

But a letter from M. de la Pagerie had arrived suddenly, upsetting everything; Madame Renaudin had exclaimed endlessly in her astonishment.

"They have arrived, Alexandre!" she had cried. "They are waiting for us at Brest! M. de la Pagerie is ill. You must go and fetch them, my friend. You can not leave your fiancée in such a predicament. I will go with you."

Without warmth, but with not too bad a grace, either, since common decency imposed a certain obligation upon him, the young captain had agreed. So he and Madame Renaudin had packed their bags at once, and started for Brest.

At the seaport, meanwhile, the travelers from the tropics had shivered during what seemed to them an interminable wait. Rose-Josephine thought she would

never forget their arrival, in a heavy, cold October rain. It had been necessary for a sailor to carry M. de la Pagerie ashore on his back, as he had become much worse during the last few days of the voyage. The picture of their strange carriage, carrying them through the streets, as they sought a proper place to stay, amid the curious looks of gossiping people and the catcalls and jokes of errand boys, became a nightmare to Josephine.

They took shelter at last in a very bad inn. Thanks to his daughter's care M. de la Pagerie gradually began to feel better. He complained constantly and was an unceasing care to her. The sky was dull; the air was cold almost to the point of frost. Still Josephine did not lose her zest for this new life. In her there burned a flame that offset cold, doubts, ugliness, the temptation to yield to despair.

She stood facing him, ill at ease, afraid, not daring to raise her eyes. Was it possible? Was this her fiancé, this good looking, slim young man, as smart as the white uniform, trimmed with silver lace, he wore so gracefully? For once reality came up to a young girl's dreams of love. She felt incapable of making a gesture, of saying a word. Let it rain — let the wind blow! Now she knew that she could triumph over the drabness of the world.

He was looking her over curiously. Was she pretty? No. But she was fresh and agreeable to the eye. How amusingly she was dressed, though, with her brightly colored linens and the gold stones shining in her ears!

"Come, children," Madame Renaudin said, encouragingly. "Talk to one another. Renew your old acquaintance. Alexandre, you may kiss your fiancée."

Gallantly the young man approached, and embarrassed Rose-Josephine with a kiss that touched her neck.

"Heavens — how I am going to love him!" she murmured to herself, trembling hands covering the heart that no longer belonged to her.

"Sweet enough — if you like that sort!" thought Alexandre de Beauharnais. "To my taste, she is a little too much of the savage. What an idea of my father's, sending all the way to the Islands for a wife for me! Why didn't he send to the Grand Turk, instead?"

He was in a hurry to be off, even a few hours after his arrival. So, next morning, they all made themselves as comfortable as possible in the berline, with the luggage outside, and, by short stages, out of consideration for the poor health of M. de la Pagerie, they set out for Paris, by way of Rennes.

The trip was long, dull and without charm. M. de la Pagerie, wrapped in his capes, had nothing to say. Madame Renaudin, sitting opposite the engaged couple, made it her business to be agreeable, kindly and discreet. Only Alexandre made an effort. He talked volubly and gossiped brilliantly; he made a game of completely dazzling and captivating the little Creole.

Seated beside him, Rose-Josephine forgot everything that did not have to do with their love — the dreadful weather, the uncomfortable roadside inns, the complaints of her father. The least thing her fiancé did delighted her; she thought she would faint when, each morning and evening, he bestowed a distant and condescending kiss upon her.

One day, as night was falling, the berline entered the tortuous streets of a new town, larger than any they had

yet seen. It was the middle of November; clouds heavy with snow hung low over the roofs. Chilled, Rose-Josephine looked through the windows of the carriage. The berline was making its way slowly between rows of dark, leprous looking houses, in a confusion of coaches, wagons and phaetons that floundered among the slippery ruts of the roadway, their drivers hurling insults at one another. About them was a population betrayed by sorrow, swayed by its own misery.

"Where are we now, Aunt?" asked Josephine.

"In Paris, dear! We will soon be home."

Paris! All at once Josephine felt the clutch of tragedy at her breast.

"Yeyette," said Madame Renaudin, "are you ready? We are going out. We have a great many more things to buy to-day."

Josephine gave a little leap of joy. She was always ready to obey her aunt's orders, but never more so than when she spoke of shopping.

Since their arrival in Paris Josephine and her father and the whole little company from Martinique had stayed with the Marquis de Beauharnais in a house in the Rue Trevenot. Madame Renaudin, in constant fear of a change of heart in the old Marquis, or a death blow to all her hopes from Alexandre, hurried preparations for the marriage as much as she could. She saw to the publication of the banns, she burdened herself with all the details, above all she took care of the ordering of Yeyette's trousseau.

That, after all, was the greatest task, though Josephine helped a good deal. How marvelous—to go shopping,

each day, with her aunt, to try on dresses after picking them out, to plunge her hands among silks and laces, to handle, every day, with an inward tremor, the jewels, the fineries, the trifles that make you beautiful for yourself and desirable in the eyes of the man you love!

She saw her fiancé for a few minutes every day. Alexandre's manner remained extremely cold, and far too polite. Yeyette would have liked a little more warmth in his ceremonious gallantry, but she had enough confidence in her own charms to be sure that their marriage would transform his reserve into protestations of passion.

On December 10, 1779, the marriage contract was signed in the Rue Trevenot, and three days later Alexandre de Beauharnais and Josephine were married at Noisy-le-Grand, where Madame Renaudin owned a small house which she gave to her niece as a wedding present.

Soon afterward the young couple took up their quarters in an apartment set aside for them in the house of the Marquis.

Rose-Josephine would rather have been alone with her husband under the warm sun of the Islands, near a nature always joyous and gay, where love seemed an eternal force. But, instead of loving under a tender sky, they had to be immured between the somber walls of the dismal house in the Rue Trevenot, the only view from which was of the opposite side of the dirty and deserted street, with menacing looking houses that shut out the light of day.

Still, she was happy in the revelation of the secret of her body! How she loved this husband of hers, who by some miracle evoked passion from the very depths of her being, like a star that, little by little, by its warmth, overcame everything.

Had she had her way she would never have left him; she was unhappy in his shortest absences. Her hunger was never satisfied; it grew constantly; her desire for caresses, kisses, love-making, was never appeased. All her happiness was found in Alexandre's bed, which he always left too soon to please her, where she would lie beside him, shaking, still inexpert, thinking only of the pleasure she took, and not of what she could give.

More and more, however, Alexandre absented himself. He was kept away, he explained, by the business of being a soldier, by the necessity of taking his drills and keeping up his friendships. Rose-Josephine found him less tender, more distant, always in a hurry. Though she dared not try to detain him, she lived only for his return. Ordinarily he came home for dinner, but one night she waited in vain. Night advanced, and still he did not come. Mortal anguish in her heart she listened to the creepy noises of the night. If something had happened to him! Not until morning did he finally appear, his wig in disorder, his clothes rumpled.

"My love, my soul!" she cried, throwing herself in his arms, "what happened to you? I thought you were dead—I wanted to die too!"

Not at all excited he looked at her, a strange expression in his eyes. Then he flung a single cruel sentence at her.

"My dear," he said, coldly, "you must get a little common sense and accustom yourself to seeing less of me. I have just received orders to rejoin my regiment at Brest."

Her hand went to her throat; she felt suffocated.

"You—you are going away—without me—you will leave me here?"

She flung herself upon him; it was as if her hands, clinging to his neck, would choke her. Roughly he put her away.

"Listen," he said. "Be reasonable. Realize that you are a soldier's wife, and that the service of the King calls me."

He was always using pompous phrases, the meaning of which she could not understand very well. But she understood in that moment that she would not see him any more, and already she was weighed down by disenchantment in the prospect of lonely nights.

Josephine's life continued, joylessly, in the grim house in the Rue Trevenot, with Madame Renaudin, the Marquis, and M. de la Pagerie, who was always gloomy, sick and full of recriminations. How long the days seemed! Never to go out, never any distraction! At the most, a daily walk, for which she spent hours in dressing herself and admiring her poor little jewels, her betrothal gifts.

Separated from Alexandre she was cold; the warmth of his arms had made up to her for the tropic heat of her native island. One after another, all the ties that bound her to home were breaking. The little monkey was dead; one after another the birds from Martinique died in their cage; the negress, Euphemie, had a terrible cough.

What was he doing at Brest, that husband to whom every beat of her heart belonged? No doubt he was amusing himself, living a carefree bachelor's life, forgetting her for women prettier and more expert in love. She wailed to him in her awkwardly phrased letters, in which she accused him of deceiving her and begged him to return if he hoped to find her still alive.

In reply she received short notes, in which he told her, playfully, to be patient, and called on God to bear witness to the pureness of his soul.

Finally, one day, the young wife learned that the Sarre regiment was leaving Brest to go into garrison at Verdun. Soon she would see her husband again! And, in fact, a few days later, he reached Paris.

At last! Their life together was to be resumed! They could mingle with their world, attend the parties and affairs to which, in view of their position, they did not by any means lack invitations. And, in point of fact, Alexandre did, for a time, take his delighted young wife to the salons that were open to them.

He was always extremely gallant toward her in public; he even seemed a little more in love with her than he had been. Happily she saw this change, and flattered herself that she had made a new conquest of him. And it was with deep emotion, and the secret hope that now she might bind herself to him more firmly than ever that, one morning, in bed, her lips pressed to his, their bodies close, she confessed:

"Listen, my love, I have a secret. Don't tell any one — but I think I am pregnant. Are you happy?"

"Oh, I am delighted, Rosel!" he said. "You couldn't give me a greater happiness." There was a sudden warmth in his voice.

That evening, when it was time to prepare to go to a ball at the house of his aunt, Fanny de Beauharnais, she asked him:

"Alexandre, give me your advice. What dress shall I wear?"

He scowled at her, disapprovingly.

"You think of going to this ball? In your condition, my dear? You're not seriously considering it! You must take care of yourself. Stay here. I will make your excuses for you."

He left her in tears. He had found now a good excuse for going about without her. She bored him; he felt that she did not do credit to his taste. To be sure, she had beautiful hair and expressive eyes. But she had a bad, heavy figure, and how awkward she was, how lacking in grace, how provincial. She could only be a drag upon his ambition.

So, without giving himself any further concern about his wife, he resumed his bachelor life. He went out early and spent his nights as he pleased, accounting to no one for his time. He entered into the intrigues of the day, seeking to advance his interests at court, but received only rebuffs there.

Again left alone in her apartment, Rose-Josephine dragged her body, deformed now by her increasing size, from room to room, going over and over in her mind her boredom and her grievances. Her only distraction was to occupy herself in putting her husband's wardrobe in order, arranging his lace-trimmed suits, in which he appeared at the parties from which her condition kept her — suits from the pockets of which there fell, only too often, letters from women, more notable for their quality as love letters than for their spelling.

Sick with jealousy, she rebelled. Was she to let this handsome husband go without a struggle? So, when she saw him again, she heaped reproaches upon him, pursued him with tears and entreaties. Obviously bored, he listened to her.

"Would you be jealous, my dear?" he said. "Nonsense! Leave that to the little bourgeois. That sort of thing is of no importance at all!"

But Josephine was not ashamed of loving her husband, and, try as she might, she could not adapt her honest and ardent nature to the ways of this world and its too easy code of morals.

"My friend," she complained, plaintively, "you don't understand that you are everything to me! I love you—I love you! When I am away from you I die from homesickness."

"Rose, you're not reasonable. You don't seem to understand that I must think of my career. Try to distract yourself. Study science, literature, art. Knowledge of such things will enable you to shine in the world some day."

Submissive, aware of her inferiority to him in education, she did plunge into the study of history and grammar. But the rudiments of knowledge did not find a foothold in the pretty Creole head so poorly adapted to their mastery.

Madame Renaudin tried to comfort her and urged her to be resigned.

"Be patient, darling," she said. "You'll see. When the baby is born Alexandre will come back to you of his own accord. He's not a bad boy, at bottom."

"I hope you may be right," she sighed—but she was incredulous.

In September, 1781, her son, Eugene-Rose, was born. At first Alexandre showed her a devotion that augured well. But soon after the christening he went back to his gay and worldly life, and, suddenly, without thought of

wife or child, he decided that it was essential for him to go to Italy.

He took his departure. For several months he devoted far less time to the study of art than to the entertainments to which he was invited. Long letters came from him in which he gave free rein to his stupid and pedantic style of writing, and in which his absurd rhetorical flights were supposed to impress his wife.

After the birth of her child Rose-Josephine suffered less from the absence of her fickle husband. The baby comforted her. In caring for the child the emptiness of her days was filled; its chatter and its gestures amused her and kept her from being lonely. Her whole interest in life began to be concentrated upon the awakening and growth of this tiny creature that she had brought into the world with so much trust and faith in life and happiness.

In truth, she was beginning to have to admit to herself that she was less and less in love with her inconstant husband. Maternity had given her a sudden maturity, and she began to judge and appraise him. She found him foppish, egotistical, prepared to do anything that would gratify his ambition and cater to his desire for pleasure. So, when he came back from Italy, he found a saddened and disillusioned young wife, who had fallen back upon herself—but who still received him graciously, and accepted his caresses gladly.

However, he was still eager for constant variety. He had scarcely been in Paris a month before he was bored, and dreaming of new adventures. An expedition was being planned to wrest the West Indies from the English. He enlisted with it. There, he believed, he was sure to gain both fame and wealth.

Rose-Josephine wept silently as she heard him declaim and, adopting the tone of a martyr, assert his willingness to sacrifice himself for his family and undertake the risks of this distant adventure when he might enjoy a peaceful life at home. What was the use of trying to hold him back? She was tired of argument, of jealousy.

He had been gone only a few days when she knew that she was again pregnant. Sadly, pitifully, she wrote to tell him of the coming of his second child—a child he ran the risk of never seeing—and she begged him, in its name, to give up his plans. Would this letter bring him back to her?

It reached him at Brest, and, a few days later, Rose-Josephine received a hastily scribbled, strangely scented note.

“I am congratulating myself on the certainty that you are pregnant, my dear wife,” he wrote. “Take care of yourself. We sail to-morrow.”



Separation

AN INFAMOUS LETTER — AN APPALLING CHOICE
THE CONVENT AT PANTHEMONT
A LOVELESS LIFE

MADAME RENAUDIN, entering the drawing room, threw up her hands at the unexpected sight that met her eyes.

“Heavens, Rose — what is the matter?” she cried.

Buried in an armchair, the young wife, her face hidden in her hands, was quivering like a child borne down by sorrows beyond its strength. At her feet the pages of a letter were scattered on the carpet.

“My dearest,” said her aunt, “what has happened?”

“Oh, if you knew!” sobbed Josephine. “It’s terrible — a letter from Alexandre. He has written to me from Martinique accusing me of having had lovers. He says Hortense is not his — he disowns her as his daughter! He wants a separation — he says I must enter a convent — oh — the wretch!”

Speechless with amazement Madame Renaudin looked doubtfully at her niece.

“Calm yourself. Let’s see, child. Are you sure you’re not exaggerating — ?”

“See for yourself — read his letter — I can’t go on —”

Quickly Madame Renaudin picked up the letter and read it. As she read surprise gave way, slowly, to stupefaction and at last to anger.

"Oh, my poor child," she said, "he is mad — I can't recognize him in this —"

"He doesn't love me any more. It's all over. I wish I were dead!"

Sobbing, she gave way again to her despair.

A few months before this, early in April, Josephine's daughter Hortense had been born. Overcome with delight, she had written to tell her husband the news immediately. Confidently she had waited for his reply; he could not fail to receive such tidings with happiness. Certainly his answer had been rather slow in coming, but she had allowed for the hazards of war and the long journey. Now, at last, in September, it had come — the first letter from him in many months. She fondled it; it was like a caress from him. Far away though he was, in spite of all the disillusionment he had cost her, she could not help cherishing a secret tenderness for the handsome husband in whose arms, after all, her body had experienced such delights.

Then she opened the letter, and the vilest of accusations struck her to the heart.

Madame Renaudin, however, soon rallied from the first shock.

"Listen, Rose," she said, "Alexandre never wrote that letter himself. He must have been beguiled by some woman."

Josephine seized upon the explanation.

"A woman — yes — some vile woman! I always knew that some day one of them would take him from me."

Just then the old Marquis came into the room. Madame Renaudin shook the letter in his face.

"Marquis, come here!" she said. "Read this and see how your son is treating his wife!"

Aghast, the old nobleman looked from Madame Renaudin, flushed with anger, to Rose-Josephine, her face swollen from weeping.

"Yes," Josephine's aunt went on. "What a fine coxcomb he is, this Alexandre! What a love letter this is! I'll read you a passage at random: 'I can tell you, coldly and without passion, that in my eyes you are one of the vilest of women. I have learned, during my stay here, how abominably you behaved yourself.' What do you think of that? And this other endearment—consider, please, Marquis, the prose of this young paragon! 'As for repentance, I don't ask that of you, for you are incapable of it—you who embraced a lover while you were making ready to sail, knowing you were the intended wife of another man. You have no soul—you are lower than the worst of scoundrels.' That's pleasant reading, isn't it? And how did he obtain his evidence? By bribing negroes, by paying them to tell their tales!"

The Marquis finally was allowed to read the letter for himself. An increasing anger caused his gouty leg to hurt him, flushed his cheeks. At last he broke out:

"The rogue! To suggest that Hortense is not his child! What insolence! I'm sure he doesn't believe a word of it! Rose, I shall write to him immediately and rate him soundly. Don't be afraid, my child, I will stand by you. I'll make him see his duty. He shall apologize to you. It's shameful. He makes me blush—me, his old father!"

"Marquis," said Madame Renaudin, "you have a truly noble heart. We shall get to the bottom of this business. Some new wench of his is at the back of it, I'm sure. Oh, I know him! I haven't a doubt that it is he, himself, who deserves the reproaches he is heaping upon his wife! But don't worry, my darling. I am here. Count on me. We'll bring him back to you, and he will be at your feet."

But Rose-Josephine only bowed her head again. One thought was in her mind; her happiness was at an end forever. This letter betrayed too clearly what was in its writer's mind; his desire to regain his liberty, his readiness to bring about any disaster to gain his end. It revealed too clearly the hypocrisy of his plotting. Even if, unlikely though it seemed, Alexandre should ultimately beg her forgiveness, she knew she could never again receive him as she had once done. For how could any woman love the man who, to be rid of his wife, the mother of his children, had recourse to insult, to calumny, to the basest charges against her?

Madame Renaudin had guessed correctly. A few months later another letter from Martinique, written this time by Madame de la Pagerie, confirmed her suspicions. Alexandre's charges had indeed been instigated by a woman. Urged by her he had really bribed the slaves, and, to gather an unsavory mess of gossip, had lent a ready ear to all the falsehoods which his interest inspired their evil hearts to invent.

She must have been beautiful, she must have been an accomplished lover, this woman! What secrets she must have known to induce the father of a family to disown his wife and his own children! It was even said that,

pregnant because of Alexandre, she had been obliged, in order to hide her condition, to sail for France before him, while he continued his life of debauchery, passing from one bed to another, thinking less of military glory than of a voluptuous satisfaction of his appetites.

Josephine was utterly disgusted. This was the man who dared to accuse her of the very crimes he himself committed with such bawdy shamelessness! She appealed to the old Marquis, calling upon him to testify for her.

"Father, you see what he has dared to do and say! As for me, do I deserve even the least of the reproaches he has heaped upon me? Haven't I always been a good wife?"

He assured her of his love.

"Patience, my poor child. I tell you I will bring him back to you — and he'll not go his own way again!" He cried out, in sudden anger: "God's blood — the black-guard! To have no more consideration for my white hairs — to cause such suffering to so sweet a wife!"

But all that Madame Renaudin and the old nobleman could do was vain. Alexandre came back to Paris and found his mistress there, and took rooms in a furnished house. He refused to consider a reconciliation. He meant to retain the liberty he had already taken so much trouble to secure. Neither his father's threats nor Madame Renaudin's entreaties, still less the advice of his friends, had any weight with him. He maintained his charges against his wife with a coolness which astonished every one.

"She need not try to change my mind to get around me," he said to Madame Renaudin, who was making a last attempt to dissuade him. "It's useless. I am armed now

against her treachery and falseness. Nothing will alter my decision. Let her choose between the convent and a return to her family. Above all, I hope she will not force me to be as severe with her as the law would allow me to be—and as her conduct would justify me in being.”

To continue the struggle had become impossible. Josephine had to make her choice. To agree to immure herself between convent walls until she came of age, to go, voluntarily, to prison in the first flush of her youth—or to return to her home and family.

Go back to *Trois Ilets*? No! Anything rather than that humiliation, that tacit admission of the truth of an unjust accusation. To confess, so, before strangers, her guilt, to be the victim of the false and mocking sympathy of those who would rejoice at her downfall! Go back to *Trois Ilets*, resume there a precarious life, compelled, perhaps, to endure the reproaches of her family, embittered by the new expense she would cause! Better, a hundred times better, to choose the convent!

Madame Renaudin agreed with her.

“Believe me, my dear,” she said, “it is better so. Besides, I know a convent where we shall be very well off. I say we, for I don’t intend to desert you in this time of trouble—for which I feel indirectly responsible. Oh, yes—I’m the one who suggested this marriage! I will live with you. Trust me, and we’ll arrange this business yet. We’ll go to court, and I’ll rub his nose in his own dirt, the scoundrel!”

A few days later Rose-Josephine entered, with Eugene and Hortense, the Convent of Panthemont, in the Rue de Grenelle, and Madame Renaudin forthwith saw to the

legal action, engaging lawyers and preparing to use her influence with the judges.

Alexandre, forced now to bring forward proof of his charges, wriggled and squirmed, pretending to be overcome with grief and shame, until, at last, fear of scandal and ridicule compelled him to capitulate. He acknowledged himself in the wrong, offered apologies, and agreed to a legal separation, the terms of which were more than favorable to his wife.

Upon coming of age Rose-Josephine was to be free to live where she pleased. She was to have the custody of her daughter permanently, and of her son until he was ten years old. Moreover, her husband was to make her an adequate allowance. So the dismal adventure of her marriage came to an end with a settlement far more advantageous than she had dared to hope for.

But she took very little joy in this. Sad, deeply depressed, she abandoned herself to her fate. And still, life in the convent was not without its charms. The rules were less strict than in most places of the sort, and the company was good; there were women of the nobility, going through the process of a separation, like her; there were old maids, the bearers of great names, but poor and anxious to live comfortably in surroundings worthy of them.

Josephine found in the convent something like a distant mirror of good society. Little by little, as her grief abated, she began to take an interest in her surroundings. She enjoyed this new world, and the society of agreeable and flirtatious women, some of whom, certainly, were not above reproach, but who received her gladly and sympathized with her, angered by the cruelty with which her

barbarous husband pursued her. They all denounced husbands, as a class, and they taught her the necessary subtleties of the art of deception, through the mastery of which a clever young woman is able to establish her domination over men and treat them all, even the most miserly and the most amorous, according to their deserts.

Without having realized it, she, for her part, had the ability to adapt herself to conditions. To please her new companions, to live as they lived, she copied their gestures, acquired their tastes and their easy manners. So she was able to give her singsong voice a warmer depth, her walk a careless voluptuousness, all her gestures a grace rich with new powers of seductiveness.

In this calmer life, well fed, amused, freed from all cares, her body changed, too. It lost its heaviness, and acquired a grace and a slenderness that astonished every one. Her face lost the childish expression it had worn when she was a young wife, thanks to her tragic experience; her features became mature, more feminine. And that same experience, in spite of herself, seemed to instruct her in the game that women play with eyes and lips, and to teach her how to allow long, passionate glances to steal forth between her half-closed eyelids.

Happy, however, she was not. Regrets for her wasted youth pursued her, and she never ceased to deplore this time forever lost to love. Constrained, by the convent rules, to remain chaste, watched closely by her relatives, she was possessed by a desire for caresses, starved for kisses. In the long, tiresome nights she missed the arms of the lover who would have awakened her body.

Often, in the evening, before going to bed, she liked to pose, nude, before her mirror. Proudly she looked at

her white, firm body, made for love, tremulous with unsatisfied desire and passion. Gently, lovingly, she stroked her long thighs, regarded all those secret treasures that made her think of a target toward which, alas, no archer aimed his darts! And, thinking of Alexandre, she sighed, bitterly:

“The dolt! Who is there to tell him what he has lost?”



A New Love

IN THE FOREST — AN ADVENTURE
DISILLUSIONMENT

IN a yellow nankeen riding habit, wearing a stylish little feathered hat, Rose-Josephine followed a sandy bridle path on horseback. About her the forest of Fontainebleau massed its deep greens, with the June sun casting flashes of gold against the darker background of the trees. In the air was the smell of tender leaves, of fresh earth; leaves tremulous with the sounds of life.

Every little while she paused to listen, her eyes watchful.

"Was he able to come?" she murmured to herself.

Suddenly a cry of joy escaped her. Beyond, in the corner of a thicket, she saw a horseman.

"Is it he? It is!"

Her horse bore her on. For his part the horseman, flattered, watched the approach of the beautiful, subtly graceful young woman who was hurrying so to meet him. When she was beside him he doffed his hat, and, as he kissed her, whispered:

"Always punctual! Rose, you are an exquisite creature!"

To be prudent, she glanced around; then, suddenly,

letting her reins fall, she threw herself upon his breast, and, embracing him, gave him her lips.

"Scipio, my love—my lover! It's two whole days since I saw you! I couldn't have lived through another! You've no idea of how I languish without you."

Her heightened color, the new animation of her lips, testified to the joy this meeting gave her. He took a long time to receive and return her kiss, and she held him hungry for his lips, unable to tear herself away. It was he who, gently, put her from him.

"Look, Rose—be reasonable! In the middle of the road! Don't you know we can be seen?"

"Oh, what then, my heart? I love you. It doesn't matter."

Their liaison had lasted a little less than two months. She had met him, after her departure from the convent, at the home of a friend in Croissy-sur-Seine. His name was Scipio de Roure. She had been attracted at once by the handsome young man, with his Roman profile; a young man who was elegant without being affected, gallant and thoughtful without foppishness; a young man who bore with a royal ease a legendary name.

A few weeks later she had met him again at Fontainebleau, where, having left Paris to economize, the Marquis de Beauharnais and Madame Renaudin had taken up their residence. There Josephine and Scipio had acted together in drawing-room theatricals; he had danced with her, they had followed the King's hunts in the forest.

During one of these hunts, having purposely managed that they should be lost together in the woods, Scipio had

taken her into a thicket, where she had more than given herself to him, worn out with love and desire. . . .

Oh, that embrace, on an April morning, in the fresh green grass, warmed by the sun but cool with dew, with periwinkles and violets in bloom and blackbirds whistling above them! She could still sense its delights. Rapturously Scipio's love had come to her like a revelation, and she had become, all at once, a new woman, ardent, exacting, expert, insatiable.

Since then they had met, sometimes, in inns in Paris, but oftenest in the forest, where the underwood offered them safe and discreet alcoves.

Rose-Josephine was happy. She was loved. She had, at last, the satisfaction of knowing that she was appreciated at her true worth. The pleasure she afforded her fiery lover was returned, and his desire for her seemed to defy time.

On this morning, however, Josephine showed less than her customary joy. Only in a transport of passion was she bound to her lover with a somber ardor. Scipio was frightened by her harsh and tragic violence.

"But, Rose," he said, "what is the matter with you? Look at me. Your eyes are troubled. Are you ill? Is something worrying you?"

She shook her head, obstinately. They had dismounted, and his arm was about her waist—a yielding waist that was kindled by his fire.

"My love—am I not here to support you, to guide you? Something has been wrong the last few days—you are different."

"I—I think I am going to have a child—"

The young man repressed a gesture of annoyance.

"You do? That is tiresome! But, Rose — you have been careless so often —"

She realized, with a sudden discomfort, that he was disturbed by her news.

"Scipio, you're not going to reproach me for loving you?"

Pressed against him, her eyes raised fervently to his, she murmured: "Think! Our child — yours — the child of our love!"

But he did not share her enthusiasm. It was as if he suspected her of a feminine trick, by means of which she sought to bind him more firmly to her.

"Look here, my dear, is this serious? Are you sure?"

"My heavens, I have no proof — it is too recent —"

He sighed, in relief.

"Then we have time. But, if it is so, Rose, what do you intend to do?"

Timidly she lowered her eyes, and, playing with a long stem of grass, she tapped her leather boot.

"Scipio — I can count on you to help when the time comes, can't I? You know my situation. It's delicate."

She paused to look at him. "Oh — I see that you are angry! Oh, how unhappy I am!"

Tears clung to her long eyelashes as he protested, weakly:

"No, Rose, no. You know how much I love you. We'll arrange it. You mustn't be afraid."

Radiantly she accepted his assurances.

"Oh, my love, I couldn't ask for more! Thank you!"

Worried, his forehead creased, he played with her hair. And she, overcome all at once by desire and the

need to show him her gratitude, whispered: "Come, I love you. I want you to be happy."

But, with a polite gesture, he drew back.

"No, my dear, not to-day. I don't want to tire you still more. Think of your health. You should rest."

Dejected, she recoiled and rose, a little humiliated, not sure whether to attribute his refusal to a defensive coolness or to excessive scruple.

"To-morrow, then, Scipio?" she said. "Yes? We shall meet here? Oh, don't say no — I need you so very much."

"I'll try, Rose."

"Swear that you will come!"

She threw herself on his breast, overcome by passion, her lips parted, her throat pulsing wildly. Her mouth held him, her red tongue playing between her open teeth, like a captive behind prison bars. He leaned over, his arms imprisoning her head. Her body swayed, as it might at the touch of a flame; he was overcome by her ardor.

"Rose, my heart . . . oh, yes, to-morrow — I will see you to-morrow."

Abruptly he pushed her from him, brusquely, leaped on his horse, and disappeared around the turn of the path.

Next day Rose-Josephine was on time at their meeting place, but the young man did not appear. No doubt something unforeseen had detained him. She passed twenty-four hours tediously, bored, depressed. The day after she awaited him in the same place. Again no Scipio! She began to be afraid, but still she taxed her imagination to find excuses for her lover's neglect of her.

The surprise he had manifested when he learned of her pregnancy might account for a passing coldness that kept him away from her. Perhaps the idea that the com-

ing of the child might separate them for a few months; he might regard her baby as an intruder, as the deformer of that body which, seemingly, he desired so greatly, and which he called his dearest possession.

A number of days went by. Rose-Josephine was in despair. Little by little distress took the place of fear. He might be ill, near death, stricken so as to be unable to come. She felt herself brave enough to dare anything, to defy the conventions of their world, to dream of any rashness, any presumption. At last she could not restrain herself any longer, and one foggy night she sent her maid with a letter to her lover, a letter full of her alarm, a letter that pleaded with him.

An hour later the maid returned with the letter still unopened. Early on the morning before M. Scipio du Roure had gone to Aquitaine, where he had some property, and where, they said at his home, he had been called by business that could no longer be put off.



Flight

DESPAIR — A LETTER FROM MARTINIQUE
ONE SAFE METHOD — DEPARTURE — A TOTAL LOSS
DELIVERANCE

SHE understood. He was gone. He had abandoned her, vilely, heedless of her, at the time when she had the greatest need of him. Was it possible that the memory of their kisses, the thought of their child, had been unable to hold him back? How little she must have meant to him — she to whom he had meant the whole of life! What humiliation, what sorrow!

The hypocrite, the wretch — to dare so to abuse her! And yet, because of the desire, the passion, he had manifested for her, she would have sacrificed everything for him, she would have followed him to the ends of the earth, submitted joyfully to the most extreme privations, happy when he smiled, repaid for all by a single night of love.

What was she to do — how was she to get out of this scrape alone? Oh, if she had only had money! But she was without resources; she lived from hand to mouth, and, following the tradition of her family, was incurring debts. She could not count at all upon her husband; he had new mistresses, and was in sore need of money him-

self. Lately she had quarreled with him concerning household expenses and purchases of jewelry, and for a long time M. de la Pagerie had sent her no money.

She could, certainly, hold out for a few months longer. Though she was already showing signs of her condition she knew the subterfuges that would conceal them and deceive those with whom she came in contact. But what a scandal there would be when she was forced to confess; what revenge Alexandre would take! She could hear him, triumphant, pouring out upon her contemptuous and ironic reproaches.

"I told the truth!" he would say. "No one was prepared to believe me. She is an abandoned woman, who was simply dishonoring my name."

At any price, she must find a way to avoid this disgrace. But how? She despaired; she wept; she cursed her faithless lover. During the lonely nights she anticipated the dreadful fate that lay before her.

But then, one morning, there came a letter from Madame de la Pagerie, in Martinique, who wrote that her father and her sister were seriously ill.

"My dear child," this letter ended, sadly, "you have been gone nearly eight years. In eight years I have not seen you once. That is a long time for a mother. Please God that I may not die before I have held you in my arms again."

Here was a ray of light for Josephine. Why had she not thought of this solution sooner? She would go to Martinique. Safety lay in flight. At Trois Ilets the scandal could be suppressed; after all, a mother was always a mother, even for an erring daughter.

Yes. To go away meant escape. She was seized with

a longing to hate every man, with disgust for the selfish behavior and passionate egotism of the whole male sex. Down there she would forget them all, in that land where, even if she had not been very happy, at least no one had been unkind to her.

Emboldened, her decision irrevocably taken, she went to see her aunt, Madame Renaudin, who was newly convalescent after a long illness, and lay stretched out in a long chair, covered with a shawl, a lace cap on her head.

"Aunt," said the young wife, trying to keep her voice firm, "I have just had bad news from Martinique."

"No tragedy, I hope?"

"No, but my father and my sister are quite ill, and Mother is asking me if she is ever to see me again, so I have decided to pay them a visit."

Madame Renaudin looked at her in alarm.

"What? You want to return to Martinique? You are crazy, my dear."

"No, aunt. I have thought it all out carefully. I shall take Hortense with me."

"And how about your son Eugene, who is to spend his month's vacation here? Don't you want to see him?"

"Ah, yes, but I think that time presses. Something tells me that my family needs me. Think, aunt—suppose I were never to see them again, suppose that, owing to my neglect, they died without embracing me once more? I think I would reproach myself for the rest of my life."

She was, in a measure, sincere; she played to perfection the rôle of a devoted daughter, homesick for her parents. Madame Renaudin was tactful; she dared not continue to protest. But she sighed.

"I, too, am growing old, my child," she said, "and

the old Marquis needs care, and to have youth about him."

"But I am coming back, aunt. I shall be on my way home in six months."

M. de Beauharnais, when he heard the news, was as astonished as Madame Renaudin. But, though they did not understand her motive, they resigned themselves to letting her go, putting down her decision to leave them and, with a light heart, to run the risks of the voyage, to an extravagance of filial love.

The next day Rose-Josephine packed, and lost no time in going to Havre with her daughter Hortense. No government vessel was scheduled to sail soon for the West Indies, but an old tub was about to weigh anchor. On this she took passage. Every one urged her to wait, warning her of the dangers to which her rashness exposed her. She refused to be persuaded; it was as if the very soil of France burned her feet. She desired only one thing: to find a new sky, other faces, to leave this vilest of lands, which had brought to her only disaster, humiliation and unmerited suffering.

So she embarked. But hardly was the ship in the Channel than it was beset by a tempest. The old ship rolled terribly; a hundred times it seemed on the point of sinking. Josephine cowered in her cabin, her child in her arms, expecting to die at any moment. It was then, though, when she was certain that the end was at hand, that she was aware of her deliverance. She had been mistaken. She was not pregnant. . . .

Saved! She was doubly saved, indeed, for suddenly the storm abated, and in the serene and pleasant sky there appeared the augurs of a swift and pleasant passage.

Overcome with joy, Rose-Josephine faced life again. Peace filled her, and, as, day by day, the sun grew hotter, the air more balmy, it seemed to her that she was looking toward a new life in which, enriched by what she had experienced, she would be able, at last, to taste a little peace and happiness.



The Return

MATERNAL REPROACHES — BOREDOM AND CHASTITY

HOW TO GET BACK TO FRANCE

M. DE BEAUVERNAI

WAS this Trois Ilets? This miserable house, this overgrown garden, these wretched negroes? She no longer recognized her birthplace.

"How everything has changed while I have been away!" she thought sadly, to herself. She didn't reflect that things, no matter how beautiful they really are, can never match the dreams and the memories of childhood days.

Everything she saw was mean, poverty stricken, without any of the charm that homesickness and distance had lent. Even the sky was less clear; the flowers were not so brilliant, the heat was more stifling for a young woman already acclimated in Europe. The things that the house lacked, things she had come to take for granted in France, shocked her.

She wondered if nature herself had really changed; if, perhaps, her reception wasn't what had thrown a gloomy veil over everything she saw. For, to tell the truth, she hadn't been greeted with rapture. They had betrayed no delight in seeing her again; it didn't seem to occur to

them that it might be their duty to make her forget her undeserved misfortunes.

The life at Trois Ilets wasn't as gay as it had been, either. Her father was a chronic invalid, whose days were numbered; her sister was a neurasthenic; her mother had become embittered, shrewish and autocratic, and neglected no opportunity to make her feel that she was a burden.

"My child," she said, "we must all face things as they are. Suppose your husband was unfaithful to you? What of it! You should have made yourself agreeable to him in spite of that—been submissive, kept him in good humor."

"But, mother, don't forget that he was the one who left me!"

"I know. But you should have been clever enough to get him back. We all have to make concessions. All women have unfaithful husbands. You've been too touchy. Your first duty was to maintain your standing as his wife. If you'd only done that you might be able to help your poor old parents now!"

Financial worries were increasing from day to day, and Josephine's mother bore their weight. M. de la Pagerie was no longer anything but a shell of his former self. She was the one who had to attack the almost insoluble problem of borrowing money, of going over the account books and the invoices and bills of lading, as if, by manipulating all these papers, she could extract from them the cash that they must have to keep them alive during the months before the crop could be sold.

Once more time hung heavy on Rose-Josephine's hands. She had no amusements, she saw only stupid and uninteresting people; around her were only old folk, the

men all married and, what was worse, Puritanical. The very luxury of which she had had a taste in Paris made the boredom and poverty of her home all the harder to bear now.

Her broken heart, to be sure, was mending itself, slowly. Her memories of Scipio du Roure grew faint, and her grief, now that he was so far away, gave way to indifference. And, to tell the truth, her escape from the menace of pregnancy had done a good deal to console her for the loss of her lover. It was when she thought of Eugene that she suffered most keenly. She wondered if she would ever see him again. What must he think of the mother who had so casually deserted him?

She sought anxiously for some way of getting back to France. Trois Ilets made her think constantly of Paris; the gay city haunted her dreams. She was always eager to hear the news from France. It was grave news; it seemed to portend disaster. It was reported that the Bastille had been taken in an uprising of the mob; even that the King and the Queen had been taken from Versailles and were being held as prisoners in the Tuileries.

Rose-Josephine heard, too, that her husband had become a politician, had attained some importance in the National Assembly, and delivered pompous speeches to that body. Each mail, now, brought news of him. He had been appointed a member of the Military Committee; on Mirabeau's death he was elected president of the Jacobin Society. Mme. Renaudin, in her letters, said that it was beginning to be believed that Alexandre was assured of a great career.

This news stunned her and revived her ambition. Alexandre might, after all, be capable of something more

than making love to lovely and frail ladies. At a word from him, now, she would have hurried to return to him, ready to forgive and to forget. But it was obvious that he had no such thought in his mind, and that he felt that he could make excellent use of his freedom to take advantage of the openings that were now coming to him from every quarter.

So month followed month, each like the last, and Rose-Josephine was in despair. How long must she prolong this stupid existence, seeing her youth slip away, in a setting devoid of pleasure, of gayety, of love?

She missed love more than anything. Her idle life made her feel more than ever that love alone could make up to her for all that she was missing. She had to be chaste, and her body suffered as a result, especially since it was inflamed by the tropical sun, by the rich perfume of the flowers, and the shameless sights, so often to be seen, of the passionate embraces of slaves and animals.

Why couldn't she be in Paris, where a score of suitors would compete for the honor and the pleasure of becoming the lover of so superb and adept a mistress? She was conscious of her own beauty, she knew that now she was skilled in all the arts of seduction. Experience had taught her how to give her body without letting her heart become involved. Ah, next time she would know how to establish her rule over men, how to compel them to obedience and adoration, gain respect and money from them—all that made life worth living! Her mind was made up. She would take advantage of the first opportunity to return to France.

Nor had she to wait very long. One of her friends, Mme. le Vassor de la Touche, had invited her to act as

godmother to her newly born daughter. She had accepted, glad of something that would, if only for a few days, provide a break in the monotonous round of her life. And, during the ceremony, she met a certain M. de Beauvernai, a rich Colonial from Santo-Domingo; a good looking, though rather coarse man, with wide shoulders, a Knight of St. Louis and a captain of the Cape regiment.

She knew at once, from the sudden ardor of his eyes, and from the warmth of his attentions, that her salvation lay in this officer. And he did not wait long to declare himself. She scarcely held out at all; she was too bored, too eager to satisfy her own appetites, to surround her surrender with the arts of a coquette.

They made love, clandestinely, taking advantage of opportunities that came so seldom that they only sharpened their passion for one another. They had to be discreet; Rose-Josephine was under a close surveillance, whether she stayed at Fort-Royal, with the Taschers, her aunt and uncle, or was at home.

"Rose," de Beauvernai said to her one day, "I shall have to sail for France before long. If you could only go with me! Then we could make love to our hearts' content!"

The eagerness of his words, the passion of his kisses, gave ample proof of his esteem for her. She sighed.

"Darling," she said, "how can you think of going away and leaving me here all alone? You say you'd like to take me with you. So would I like to go! But I must have some excuse for leaving my family so abruptly — and some excuse that won't make them suspicious and lead them to interfere. Beauvernai! Can't your love find some way to arrange it?"

"I'll rack my brains, Rose," he promised, stoutly.

"Do — and, as for me, I'll think of nothing else, night and day. And you know what they say — that if God won't give a woman what she wants the Devil will!"

It didn't take her long to find the excuse she wanted. Martinique was disturbed. The blacks were rising against the whites on all sides, and massacring their masters. There was rebellion, with all the dangers of anarchy and civil war. There was alarm at Trois Ilets, and Rose exaggerated her own fears. It occurred to her that the time had come to take a decisive step.

"Mother, dear," she said, one evening, "I don't know whether I ought to stay here much longer. The country isn't safe any more; I'm worried about Hortense. If there is to be real trouble I would only be an added care for you. Don't you think I might do well to take advantage of the first chance to go back to France?"

"In view of the circumstances, I can't try to keep you here," said her mother. "Act as you think best. You know I would be glad to have you stay longer, but it's not a responsibility I care to assume, if you feel as you say you do."

Rose-Josephine found it hard to conceal her surprise. What? Not a single attempt to keep her, not a word of regret? She guessed, though, that Mme. de la Pagerie must take a certain satisfaction in the thought of being freed from the burden of her support.

Accordingly she took Hortense and went to stay at her uncle Tascher's, in Fort-Royal. She had been there a few days when Beauvernai came to see her, early one afternoon.

"Rose! Hurry! Pack your things. Have them taken

at once aboard *La Sensible* — she's sailing this evening! I've taken passage for us both. Hurry!"

"What? My dear — do you expect me to go off at a moment's notice like this? Won't you let me have time to kiss my parents good-by for the last time?"

"For Heaven's sake, Rose, don't think of it! You've only two hours to get ready! Don't be childish. If you miss this ship there won't be another for a long time."

That settled the matter. She packed and drove to the harbor, bidding a hasty good-by to her relatives. Scarcely had she set foot on board the ship, where Beauvernai was anxiously waiting for her, when *La Sensible* got under way. As she passed out of the harbor a few shots were fired from the forts, which were in the hands of the rebels. In the hold, where near her scanty baggage, she had taken refuge, Rose-Josephine nearly died of fright. But the ship was already in the open sea. Once more she had escaped.

A few hours later, in the stillness of the warm, tropical night, held close to the breast of her protector, Josephine, her eyes turned eastward, was able to look with hopeful confidence at the rising stars that were leading her to a new destiny. . . .



The Arrest

RUPTURE — AN EMPTY PURSE — LOVE FILLS IT

REAL, TALLIEN, SERVAN

RISE AND DECLINE OF ALEXANDRE DE BEAUHARNAIS

IMPRUDENT BEHAVIOR — AN ORDER OF ARREST

UPON her arrival in Paris Rose-Josephine took up her residence in a house in the Rue-Neuve-des-Mathurins which her sister-in-law, Marie-Françoise de Beauharnais, placed at her disposal. De Beauvernai took rooms nearby, and they didn't hesitate to live openly together. She hoped, as a matter of fact, to turn the general knowledge of this liaison to her advantage.

"Who knows?" she thought. "If Alexandre hears of it he may be jealous and seek a reconciliation."

But Alexandre, although he knew very well what his wife was doing, seemed unconcerned. He affected an amused indifference to her behavior, and, so far as that went, he was busy with politics and his own affairs of the heart.

The affair with Beauvernai did not go well in Paris, however. The Colonial was exacting. Long accustomed to ordering slaves about, he had acquired a brutality he was unable to modify much, even with women. And, to cap

the climax, he was jealous. Rose-Josephine was no longer disposed to submit to the whims of any man.

She saw that her relations with de Beauvernai could not last much longer. Her lover was rich, to be sure, but he was not, to her mind, very generous, and, too, he would, sooner or later, go back to the West Indies. Already he let her see that his passion for her was waning; other women were beginning to interest him; Rose-Josephine saw that she could not hope to make use of him indefinitely.

Accordingly, having a due regard for her own interests, she broke off an affair that was already boring her. She moved from the Rue-des-Mathurins to a house in the Rue Saint-Dominique. She realized, now, that she had made a mistake when she let her relations with the handsome Santo-Domingan become a matter of public knowledge; that she had, quite possibly, by her parading of her lover, still further alienated the husband she still had some hope of winning back.

So, now, still in the hope of inducing him to return to her, she accepted an invitation from Mme. Renaudin and the old Marquis and went to Fontainebleau, with her two children, to spend the summer. Still Alexandre made no move. As yet, in Paris, she had met him only in a few drawing rooms. He had been polite to her, but he had treated her with a rather ironic gallantry. They had discussed the education of Eugene and Hortense, and their business, but such matters had not led to any real warmth.

Alexandre, by this time, had become a personage of real importance. In June he became President of the Constituent Assembly. Some expected him to be dictator, in the end, and a certain amount of reflected glory shone

upon the woman who bore his name. Rose-Josephine, naturally, liked this; it was pleasant to have drawing rooms opened to her, even in so indirect a fashion, and to enjoy the attention of men who were among the most powerful politicians of the moment.

When she returned to Paris she was much sought after. Mme. Hosten, a Creole from St.-Lucia, the Marquise de Moulins, Mme. de Genlis and others vied in an effort to entertain her. She saw much of them; with them she made up parties, went about among the theaters, and visited many less reputable pleasure resorts.

But the Constituent Assembly made way for the Legislative Assembly and Alexandre de Beauharnais's political credit was immediately almost destroyed. New men rose who took his place and threatened completely to eclipse him. Obligated by circumstances to give up the hope of winning political fame, he turned again to a military career in the hope of reëstablishing himself. Appointed first as Adjutant General of the Army of the North, then as field-marshal, he went to his post, and Rose-Josephine heard no more of him.

Her own situation had now become precarious. Without backing, without means, she realized that she could hope to maintain herself only by her wits—and by the rewards her charms might gain for her.

Mme. Hosten-Lamothe had for a long time been urging her to pay her a visit at Croissy-sur-Seine, in a small house she had taken there. Some men of rising importance in the Revolution frequented it, and this was enough to induce Josephine, finally, to accept the invitation. There she met Real.

Real, a man of humble birth, but artful and ambitious,

had made a name for himself as a lawyer and a politician. He was one of the leaders of the Revolution; moreover, he was secretary of the Commune of the Tenth of August, and prosecutor of the Châtelet. Rose-Josephine appealed to his taste, as he told her with the frankness of the sans-culotte he was. She resisted him for a few days; then became his mistress.

It seemed to her an excellent thing, in a time when every one's liberty was constantly threatened, to make a friend of one highly placed in the administration of justice!

Through Real she met Tallien. She was immediately attracted by Tallien, with his gentle countenance, his delicate features, his noble bearing. He was, at this time, assistant prosecutor of the Commune, but, a man of rare intelligence, he seemed likely to go far.

Rose-Josephine became his mistress as much through self-interest as because of his appeal to her senses. He was sensual, always greedy, and a passionate lover. But his abrupt fits of violence, his rough, almost cruel kisses, with which he sought to carry her away, pleased her almost as much as they disturbed her. He was a lover who, in repose, was gentle, handsome, with charming manners; it was almost impossible to believe that the same man, when passion swept him, could turn, in her very arms, into a creature of lust, his mouth distorted by an animal desire, his eyes those of a wild beast.

Josephine had begun now to go, without remorse or shame, almost, indeed, joyfully, from the arms of one man to another. . . . If she had a favor to seek from Barrère, or, above all, from Servan, the Minister of War, she offered herself in payment, and it seemed to her that the ministers hardly lost in the exchange.

It was a gesture that, for her, mattered so little! What! Was she to refuse to oblige a relative, a friend, sometimes to save them from death, when the cost was an abandonment of her body that, after all, was not without its compensatory pleasure? One more lover was, for her, after all, simply a means of making her own security a little firmer. The head of a woman whose lips one has kissed ought to be sacred, it seemed to her! And she couldn't believe that there lived, among the men of the Revolution, a monster capable of sending to the scaffold a body which had given him so much pleasure.

The immediate future was appalling. Louis XVI had been executed; Marie-Antoinette had followed him almost immediately to the guillotine. Every day now that that new instrument of death had become a fixture, it sent crowds of aristocrats to their death. A wind that bore a panicky terror on its wings blew through the city. Every one suspected his neighbor, and hatred was in every heart.

Upon her return to Paris Rose-Josephine continued to frequent the society of Creoles and the reactionaries who had made so much of her in the time of the Constituent Assembly. They organized festivities among themselves, seeking forgetfulness and distraction; they took an almost bitter delight in enjoying life under the constant menace of the guillotine, under the very eyes of the red-caps.

But, meanwhile, Rose-Josephine lost no opportunity to strengthen the ties that attached her to Real, Tallien and Barrère. She felt that the time was coming when it would be vital for her to have these men remember the nights of pleasure that she had afforded them.

And that time was at hand. Alexandre de Beauharnais, appointed commander in chief of the Army of the Rhine,

had been unable, with his wretched strategy, to keep Mayence from falling into the enemy's hands. This defeat was a bitter one, and the Convention was disposed to punish the man responsible for it.

Then, at last, he did remember that he had a wife, and that she had friendships which might be useful to him! Shamelessly, he wrote and asked her for her help. But, just then, Rose-Josephine felt herself obliged to be cautious on her own account. All former nobles were suspected; they were allowed to live in Paris only when they were furnished with certificates of citizenship which no degree of friendly complacence could obtain.

Rose-Josephine, accordingly, had taken herself hastily to Croissy, where, without too much trouble, she induced the local authorities to vouch for her as a good citizen of the republic. Moreover, to attest still further her republican sentiments, she bound her son over as an apprentice to a carpenter of Croissy, and enrolled Hortense as an apprentice dressmaker with the Citoyenne Lanoy.

Armed with the papers that had now become indispensable she returned to Paris, where she was now plain Citoyenne Beauharnais, who, in public, called every one *thou* and abjured all the observances of good manners. She was reassured. After all, she was acquainted with all the men who held office, and much more than acquainted with a number of them.

Now, however, events were moving fast. Alexandre, feeling that his power was crumbling, resigned his commission as general and hastily sought refuge in Loire-et-Cher, where the people were devoted to him. In the Convention there was talk — still covert — of his arrest. But

the fatal words "aristocrat" and "traitor" began to be coupled with his name.

All at once Rose-Josephine heard, to her dismay, that the Committee of Public Safety had ordered the arrest of General Beauharnais; then that his person had actually been seized, and that he was incarcerated in the Carmelite prison. This was in the middle of March, 1794.

Thenceforth she thought only of what she might do to extricate her husband from this terrible predicament. He had behaved badly enough to her in his time, but he was in misfortune now, and she pitied him. She anticipated little difficulty in saving him. Tallien, Real, Barrère — none could refuse anything she asked of them! She went to work, entered into intrigues, made innumerable calls, besieged influential representatives with petitions, personal visits, entreaties.

Those who were closest to her begged her to modify her zeal.

"Be careful, darling," said Mme. Hosten. "Don't be rash. I know you enjoy a good deal of influence, but don't forget that the men who are in power to-day may fall under the guillotine to-morrow."

"Even so," said Rose, rebelliously, "I can't abandon my husband without trying to help him! He is the father of my children."

As best she could she continued her efforts, never realizing that this was the time of all times for those who held life dear to make themselves as inconspicuous as possible and to have nothing to say. The shadow of death was already upon her, though she could not see it. . . .

It was seven o'clock in the evening, and growing dark.

Rose-Josephine was at home, in the Rue Saint-Dominique, getting ready to dress and go to dine at Mme. Hosten's. All at once she was startled by a violent knock at the door of her apartment.

"Lanoy! See who it is," she said to her maid.

The servant obeyed. A moment later she came back, looking frightened.

"Madame — it's some sans-culottes. They want to see you."

"Very well. Wait — and have my mauve muslin dress ready."

A small crowd had already invaded her ante-chamber. In the dim light she saw two men in dark coats, their waistcoats turned inside out, and wearing Souvaroff boots. Behind them she could make out the Phrygian caps, the Carmagnole jackets and the wide, striped breeches of three sans-culottes.

"Citoyenne," one of the two leaders said to her, "I am Lacombe, a member of the Revolutionary Committee of the Tuileries, charged with the execution of the orders of the Committee of Public Safety. This is my colleague, George —"

"What can I do for you, citizens?" Josephine interrupted. "I'm not hiding any aristocrats in the house. You are free to search it —"

"You are mistaken, Citoyenne Beauharnais. We're not worrying about such cattle. At the moment we are only after you."

"Me? Me?" She felt herself growing pale, but, with an effort, she remained calm. "And what do you want of me, citizens?"

"We have come to arrest you."

"To arrest me? There must be some mistake! I am a good republican and well known as such. My citizenship is above reproach."

"This is the time for you to prove it, then, Citoyenne Beauharnais, for we have orders to take you to the English prison—or, failing that, to the Carmelites."

"You will arrest me? You dare arrest me? Who gives you such a right! You're impostors! I shall complain to Citizen Real—to Citizen Tallien—to plenty of others—they'll teach you a lesson! I have never failed to love and serve the republic—"

"We find that easy to believe, Citoyenne, but we are only the servants of the Committee of Public Safety. Here is the warrant for your arrest."

Rose-Josephine almost tore the paper from Lacombe's hands. She stared at it with terror-filled eyes. It was incredible—an order of the Committee for her arrest!

"Oh—oh!" she sobbed. "But I have done nothing! I am innocent! What charge is there against me? It's frightful! They can't be going to take me to the scaffold! I must be tried first! I will disprove all these slanders—"

"Calm yourself," said Lacombe, "and prepare to go with us. Meanwhile, we will examine your papers."

"But, citizens," she begged, at her wits' end, "you won't take me away without letting me kiss my children goodbye?"

"Are they here?" asked George, aggressively.

"No—citizen—my daughter is learning to be a dress-maker in the city—and my son—"

"Citoyenne, we have no time to lose! Your children can come to embrace you in prison—it will make life easier for you there!"

Already, at a sign from their leader, the intruders were ransacking the furniture, turning drawers upside down, searching in every corner for the smallest scrap of paper that bore writing. During this procedure Fortune, Josephine's little pug dog, was barking furiously about the feet of the raiders, his hair bristling, his ears pricked up. Distracted, in tears, frantic with terror, Rose-Josephine, aided by her maid, hastily packed some linen and a few toilet articles.

"And your powder, madame?" cried Lanoy.

Her powder and her rouge! Could she have been going to forget them, even in this crisis? Between two frantic gestures she tried to quiet Fortune, talking to him as if he had been a person.

"Be still — I shall be home soon! You'll see."

"Come, Citoyenne — are you ready?" asked George, impatiently.

She flung her arms about her maid.

"Lanoy! I entrust my children to your care! You will see to them, won't you?"

Choked by her tears the servant could answer only with sobs.

"Come, Citoyenne — we must be off!" ordered Lacombe.

Crushed by shame and anxiety, the Creole followed the dismal procession. As it turned the corner Fortune, frantic with rage, still flung himself, barking madly, against the door of the house.



In the Carmelites

A PRISON UNDER THE TERROR

LOVE IN THE SHADOW OF THE GUILLOTINE — HOPE

DEATH DRAWS NEAR

THE MIRACLE OF THERMIDOR — FREE!

SHE pressed herself, in despair, against the man's huge chest.

"Lazare — tell me that you will protect me — tell me you won't let me die!"

Hoche, carried away by his pity, embraced a body which no longer harbored any feeling except fear.

"No, Rose — they won't dare. After all — what have they against you? They will see their mistake — you'll soon be released. But you must wait — there are so many prisoners, and so many dossiers that must be examined. It may take time —"

Hanging on his words, she drank eagerly at this spring from which words of hope flowed miraculously. They passed, like a refreshing stream of water, over her eyes, inflamed from weeping, over lips dried by care; for a moment they appeased her tormented heart.

"Oh, my dearest — it must come right, mustn't it? I've done nothing that I should be in this danger! I have always loved the republic — I have never done anything

unpatriotic! I only asked to be allowed to live in peace. Lazare — tell me — they are men, after all, aren't they? They will remember that I have two children? What will become of them without me?"

They remained, in a close embrace, in a dark recess, a few square feet in size, at the top of a staircase, lighted only by a skylight that gave upon an inside hallway. Except in the middle of the day it was dark and fetid there. A pallet, a miserable stool, a water pitcher made up all the furnishing of this cell.

There, whenever she could escape the vigilance of the warders, she came to meet General Hoche and to seek from love a final reason for not despairing of life. Lazare stroked her hair gently, and felt, gradually, how, in the ardor of his embrace, her heart beat less wildly against his own. . . .

"Rose," he said, "it is late. You must leave me and go back to your companions."

"Let me stay with you a little longer! Oh, my dearest, if you knew how the hours drag by when I am not with you! What a nightmare life is in that room — the very walls are spattered with blood! I am surrounded by women who think and talk of nothing but death!"

"Rose, dear — be sensible. If the jailers catch us they may separate us forever! You know what they're like — they like nothing better than to persecute us and make us suffer more."

"It's true — you're right, Lazare."

Clinging to his lips, she whispered:

"Expect me to-night! I'll come to you again after the first rounds."

"Rose, darling—be careful! And—remember your husband. Suppose he found out?"

She smiled sadly.

"Beauharnais? Oh, he doesn't worry about me! Don't give him a thought. He's in another part of the prison, anyway—and, besides, he's much more concerned with Delphine de Custine just now than with me. They tell me it's all he can do to console her for the execution of her husband—but he seems to have succeeded quite well!"

Her voice altered, suddenly, and she cried out, bitterly:

"No—no—have pity on me—don't refuse! Lazare—my dearest! Do you know what you mean to me? What would become of me without you? I need you—to be with you—I need your kisses! Your eyes are all that I have left of the blue sky, your lips are my life—if my blood isn't frozen already it's only because yours has kept it warm! You don't know how weak I am when I am not with you, and how afraid. When I am beside you the future isn't black any more; I believe in your destiny! You will save my life. You are so good—so strong—I love you so!"

Gently, he pushed her toward the stairs. She went down, stumbling at every step, and rejoined her own cellmates. As she moved away from him, as the warmth of his embrace cooled in her body, a chill from the stone vault enveloped her.

Rose-Josephine had been in prison for two weeks. It seemed to her that she would never forget her arrival. She had, she knew, sounded the depths of human horror and despair.

Dripping walls, cells full of dark shadows, filthy floors,

corridors in which one stumbled at each step upon heaps of dirt, a fetid air, above all the constant sound of groans and sobs, torn from creatures obsessed by the same terror—that was the prison of the Carmelites. Men and women were herded together, people of every calling, great noblemen and women of the aristocracy, mechanics, deputies, historians, priests, servants, the young and the old, children, all forced together in promiscuity, mingled in their squalor, their sweat and their despair, all already in the shadow of the knife.

She had to live, to eat, to sleep, in this hell, her flesh crawling, utter disgust in her heart, terror always before her eyes! She saw only tears, arms stretched out in despair, she heard only entreaties, cries of agony; at night she was awakened from her troubled sleep by the sudden outcry of those afflicted by the nightmare of the guillotine!

There, gradually, Rose-Josephine roused herself from the stupor into which her arrest had plunged her. She was confined in a large room in which she found the Duchesse d'Aiguillon and other women already imprisoned. They gave her a mattress in which vermin thrived. She saw, as she was led into the cell, that long streaks of dark red were smeared on the wall. Seeing her surprise one of her neighbors whispered:

“Madame, they say those marks were left by the bloody swords that the Septembrists left leaning there when they paused to rest, tired of killing the priests!”

She recoiled. Must she sleep under those frightful stains, hovering over her, like the most terrible of portents?

For several days she was prostrated in a stupor from which she was roused only by the shouts of the jailers, as they called out the names of those condemned to death.

Her heart scarcely beating, her flesh clammy with perspiration, she looked then at those beings, already detached from the world, as they tore themselves from their husbands, their wives, their friends, to disappear, amid cries of pity, sobs, savage curses, the echoes of which rang out through the rooms, pierced the walls, stifled the last hopes of the bravest. She slept badly, haunted by the bloody traces of the swords; she could not eat, nauseated by the sight of the wretched fare that was all that was offered to the prisoners. She longed only to die there, quietly, without pain, and, above all, without thought.

Then she had been allowed a short interview with her husband, who was confined in another part of the prison. They talked for a few minutes in the presence of a jailer. How Alexandre de Beauharnais had changed! His mottled skin, his whitened hair, bore eloquent testimony to his anxiety, and to the certainty he was, day by day, acquiring, of the uselessness of all his efforts to save his neck from the guillotine. Yet he was not ready, even now, to admit himself beaten, and he still bore himself bravely, like a good soldier—he, with his handsome, virile face, which had helped him, in a few days, to make Delphine de Custine forget a newly executed husband!

The two, brought together by their common misfortune, were quickly reconciled. The peril they shared made them forget their grievances, led them to make common cause, and to promise to do all they could for one another. The sight of her husband restored a little of Rose-Josephine's courage, gave her new hope.

But, as soon as Alexandre was led away, she gave way again to her despair. She was too lonely; there was no one to whom she could pour out her complaints, no one

who could understand the terrible nature of her plight. Every one was too occupied with his own troubles to give thought to those of others.

So it happened that Hoche, already imprisoned when she came, interested himself in this pretty young woman whose heart seemed to be broken by her undeserved misfortunes. Only lately married to a young girl whom he loved tenderly, from whom he had been ruthlessly separated, he was the better able to sympathize with the distress of a charming woman meant to give delight to men.

He formed the habit of going down from his cell to console her. And with what gratitude she received him — with what a desperate passion she clung to this young blond giant! He wasn't afraid — not he. He trusted in his star.

He was one of those simple but indomitable men against whom the malign influences of fate beat in vain. It seemed to Josephine that to link her fate with that of Hoche represented her only chance of escaping the scaffold. And, in exchange for his protection, she offered him, with a childish faith, her eyes, that he might save them from everlasting darkness; her mouth, that he might spare it from the need of tasting the sawdust in the basket into which, under the guillotine, the severed heads were dropped; her white throat, as if the strength of his kisses could gird it with an armor able to resist the steel of the guillotine. She gave up to him her whole submissive body, in which fear had slain desire.

Then, suddenly, came the reaction. Love! Only love could save her. All the women about her turned toward him as to a redeemer. They sought from his strength a few brief moments of forgetfulness of their plight; they

demanded from him the child that would at least delay the moment of their execution.

To be able to say that one was pregnant was to utter the magic word that opened the door to freedom. So these women lost no chance to assure themselves of that opening. What man could refuse them such a service? What lover would not have taken pity on women fated, in the fullness of their youth, to the worst of destinies who sought from him, between dungeon and tumbril, a moment of ecstasy, an excuse for hope, in spite of all, that life might still be sweet?

To pass one last night together! To embrace as they thought: "To-morrow we shall see one another no more, our eyes will be glazed, our mouths cold; to-morrow our hot and passionate bodies will have passed into oblivion!" To come to the very threshold of death, and then to know, all at once, that a new life has been born within one's self, a life that assures the safety of one's own!

How little she cared that one must then undergo the inspection of a matron. How gladly she would have sacrificed her modesty! How eagerly she would have submitted herself to the harsh examinations of the doctors charged with verifying her claims!

Rose-Josephine had no hope now except through love. And love meant Hoche. In his arms alone did she gain any respite from the shadow of the scaffold. That vision could not reach her there! She gave herself to him now in a transport of despair, with a fierce delight. The pallet in the recess seemed to her the most voluptuous of beds. Their embraces were like mortal combats in which love and death were at odds. Which would triumph? All her

instinctive faith in life was in the ardor she brought to their meetings. . . .

"Citoyenne Beauharnais!" called the jailer.

His shout fell upon the Creole's ears like a thunder-clap. She rose, livid, her knees shaking, her hands clutching her heart. It was the end! Her turn had come!

"Citoyenne — your children are here to see you! Be grateful to the Committee of Public Safety, which has, in its goodness, given them permission to visit you."

Her eyes misty, overcome by an emotion too great to be borne, she sank back on her bed. The door opened, and Eugene and Hortense came in, followed by Lanoy, who led Fortune on a leash. The children rushed to their mother.

"My darlings — it's really you!" she sobbed, as she kissed them. "Oh, I was afraid I would never see you again! But here you are — is it possible! Both together! You have been my only joy, all these long days —"

She held them close, her tears wetting their cheeks. Eugene, his handsome face suddenly grave, turned toward her.

"Mamma — don't cry any more!" he begged her, kissing her hands. "We are going to save you! We love you too much to let any one hurt you. We are going to the judges and the deputies. We will go on our knees to them if we must, and tell them the truth. They will believe us — they will have to give you back to us!"

"My darling — if only God will listen to you!"

She couldn't stop looking at them, caressing them, kissing them. In their eyes she could still see the reflection of the sky; the fresh air and the sunlight were still in their

hair; they made her think of the fresh beds in which they lay, the clean linen that they wore, the decent food that free folk eat. And Fortune, in his turn, jumped in her lap, seeking his share of her caresses.

"You ugly darling!" she said. "How lucky you are to be a dog — if you knew how I envied you!"

Suddenly she stopped, startled. Behind the back of the jailer, who had to be present, to prevent illicit communications, Lanoy was making an incomprehensible gesture. She pointed to the dog, touched her throat, and then put her finger to her lips. What did she mean?

Then, as the jailer turned away for a moment, Lanoy bent down and whispered:

"Under his collar — a letter —"

Now Rose understood. Picking up the pug in her arms she slipped her hand under his collar. A scrap of paper was hidden there. Quickly she hid it in her belt. For that Fortune certainly deserved a kiss on his black nose!

The jailer told them the time was up. The children embraced their mother again.

"Mamma, we'll come again soon. Or, better still, you'll come to us!"

She smiled sadly as she returned their kisses.

"Be good, and think of me, darlings. And, Lanoy, take good care of them!"

Stifling her sobs, heavy of heart, she watched them go. The door closed behind them. Hortense's little hand waved her a last farewell in the darkness of the corridor. Worn out, she sat down on her bed. Something rustled in her belt. Ah — she had forgotten to read her letter! She looked around; there was no one she need suspect.

Going to a skylight, she opened the sheet of paper. Upon it Marie Lanoy, in her rude writing, had traced a few lines.

Friends were circulating petitions for her and for her husband, at Ferte and at Croissy. Evidence in their favor was being gathered; approaches were being made to representatives in the Convention. She must not despair; all who were interested in her fate were sure of the outcome. They had confidence.

Confidence! Again and again Rose-Josephine read that word, which was like a talisman. Her gratitude to obscure and courageous friends was boundless. If only they might succeed!

Outside devoted friends who were working for her. Within — the arms of Hoche! With an immense relief she felt hope being born again in her heart.

Bad news brought her back to earth. Hoche had been ordered to appear before the tribunal of the Committee of Public Safety. He was going to the Conciergerie — from which, as a rule, none came out except to go to the scaffold. But he knew no fear, and his assurance seemed bound to impress the judges.

Rose, though, was desolate. What was to become of her, deprived of the eyes that replaced the blue of the sky for her, of the mouth that kept alive what little spirit remained in her?

"Lazare!" she cried. "You can't go! You can't leave me like this! What will happen to me? Oh, if you love me at all, take me with you! You can explain to them. They're not so bad, perhaps. Don't leave me here —"

He was dumb, filled with grief, by this grief of hers

that nothing could appease. She clung to him, kissed his hands, pleaded with him, her hands clasped, sunk in a despair that came close to madness. But then, all at once, she thought of what her lover's release might mean to her.

"Forgive me, Lazare — I'm mad! I will try to be brave. Yes — go, it's better so. When you are free, find Tallien, Real, Barrère — they were my friends. Tell them they must help me, that they mustn't let me die! They know me. You promise me, Lazare? You will remember how I have loved you?"

The moment of parting had come. A sans-culotte, separating them, pushed her brutally against the wall. As he reached the door she held out her arms to him for the last time.

"Lazare — I was forgetting! It would be terrible — but if — if luck is against me — I trust my children to you! You will watch over them —"

As he went Hoche made a gesture that was a promise and a consolation at the same time.

Once he was gone she fell into a stupor like that of a sick animal, rousing herself only to groan and weep over her misfortunes. Her companions had stopped trying to comfort her. Could any one, even if the worst came to the worst, show so little courage, be so completely lacking in self-respect and resignation? Couldn't she, out of consideration for the rest, restrain her lamentations?

Only one young girl of fifteen, Mlle. de Croiseille, whose lover, Beauvoir, had left her pregnant before he was guillotined, tried to console her. She came and sat beside her, caressed her like a child, and whispered soothing words.

"Madame," she said, "have confidence. Don't let yourself go. You must be brave — that is the best way to win the judges over. I'm sure you'll see your children again. Some one has heard just to-day that the tyranny is nearly over. We have sympathizers and people who are working for us, outside."

Rose looked at her more hopefully.

"I hear that there are many attacks on Robespierre —"

"Oh, don't utter that monster's name —"

She clung to the young girl who was trying to comfort her, returned her kisses; looked enviously at the evidences, already apparent, of her pregnancy.

"Child — how lucky you were! You have nothing more to fear, at least."

She actually envied this child, alone in the world, without parents or relatives, abandoned by all, soon to become a mother in prison — but sure of being spared from death! The fate of the most wretched, if only they were assured of life, seemed better to her than her own.

She took no interest, now, in anything; for days she had neglected the care of her body, even of her face. But, all at once, she changed; once more she thought of her appearance. Now she spent hours at her toilet, powdered and painted herself, tidied her dress, tried the effect of a ribbon in her hair. She must look her best before her judges; she understood that her beauty and her grace were going to be her most eloquent advocates. They were men — surely they wouldn't carelessly send to her death a pretty woman, wipe out a smile that was the delight of all who saw it, bring the chillness of the tomb to a bosom that was a pledge of delight.

In her saner moments she planned her defense, re-

heard her attitudes, studied, carefully, her pleas and entreaties, thought of how best to proclaim her innocence. Oh, she could make them believe her! It would be so simple, really. She sought only justice, simple humanity. She thought she knew how to persuade them of her loyalty to the republic. But — each hour robbed her of a little of her new found confidence.

The prison was full to overflowing. Room had to be made. Every day squads of those condemned to death were taken away, groaning, amid the despairing cries of those who waited their turn. The shouts of the jailers, as they called over the list, were dreadful beyond words — that interminable list, that went echoing through the cells!

Her brow dampened by an agonizing perspiration Rose-Josephine had all she could do to keep from crying out at the sound of each name. She lay on her bed, shutting her eyes, her fingers in her ears, trying to shut out the dreadful sights and sounds. Only when the jailer had shut the door again dared she rise and look around again. Spared again! Even the cell was tolerable — her bed was so comfortable — the air she breathed was so good!

But death was about to touch her closely. Alexandre had just been sent to the Conciergerie, and every one knew what that meant, in his case. Two days later she received a long letter from him that left her in no doubt as to the fate in store for him. So — that was the end for him! And her turn was coming; she must die. She rallied her forces for a last struggle.

She did not want to die. Some miracle must save her at the last moment. Tallien, Barrère, Real, Hoche — they must appear, and snatch her from the hands of the executioner! What were they doing? Had they forgotten that

they had held her in their arms? Oh, she knew how selfish they were, all these men she had loved, and who had hurt her so. But it seemed incredible that those among them who were still alive should utterly forget the delight she had given them! Hoche, especially — their kisses must still be warm on his lips! Even if they were not grateful, they ought to have a little pity for her.

She turned often to the cards for some sign of hope or despair. She thought she might find, in telling her fortune a moment's peace, the ghost of a reason for keeping her faith in some miraculous intervention in her behalf.

But even the cards mocked her and betrayed her. The black card, the nine of spades, was always the one she cut! She started again, shuffled the cards, feverishly, and laid them out on the filthy coverlet of her bed. Always the nine of spades turned up — the death card. Death was everywhere, all about her. It was in the air she breathed; it rose from the cards, through her hands and her arms, entered her veins, flowed with her blood to her heart.

She gave up hope at last; beaten, she resigned herself to die. Crushed, she refused food; it seemed that she must die where she lay. Her cellmates, really frightened, asked a Polish doctor to give her some attention. But the doctor, looking at her, shook his head.

"Poor thing!" he said. "The executioner won't have much trouble with her!"

One morning the jailer came and took her bed.

"Why are you taking it from her?" asked Mme. d'Aiguillon.

"She won't need it much longer," the man answered, in a gloomy voice.

But she didn't hear him. She was sunk in a terror

that petrified her body and dulled her mind. Sometimes she came out of her trance—but only to live over, in anticipation, the moment of her execution.

They were coming—she heard them, they were after her. The Angel of Death was calling her name. She felt the chill of the scissors on her neck—cutting her hair to make all ready for the knife! Then—the start, the ride in the tumbril, the shouts and jeers of the mob. Ah—the brutal hands of the executioner, were reaching for her now, stripping her, thrusting her toward the guillotine which was about to hurl her head into eternity!

The great news was in the air. Every one had heard it, but none knew whence it had come. Could they believe it? It was too glorious, it went so far beyond the wildest hopes that none dared to credit it!

The tyrants, the monsters of the Committee of Public Safety, who had been sending hundreds of innocent victims to their death each day, had been overthrown themselves!

But they must wait before they dared rejoice too much. Yet it did seem that there was a chance. The jailers no longer appeared. Two days had passed since they had cried out, in the voices of mocking demons, the names of the victims; not for two days had they seen the condemned, herded like cattle, being driven out.

Some prisoners said they had seen, through the skylights, people on neighboring roofs who waved to them cheerfully. Then, little by little, details filtered into the cells. The news was true. Robespierre, Couthon, Saint-Just had had their turn on the scaffold. It was Tallien who, leading the attack upon them, had caused their ruin. It was said

that he had been actuated by love, because he had wanted to save the life of his mistress, Mme. de Fontenay, a young woman of marvelous beauty, held in the Petite-Force.

Yes—this time the news was true. In every corner of the Carmelites the prisoners wept and embraced one another. Rose-Josephine, gradually, rose from the depths; it seemed to her that she had been resurrected; that she had a new body, with virgin eyes and heart. Moved, a little sad, she thought of Tallien, who, unwittingly, had saved her and her companions. But, after all, did it matter that he had done it for another woman's sake? Love had triumphed over death.

Now the first batch of prisoners was freed; they departed amid cries of joy. Rose-Josephine, still a little anxious, but able to smile, waited her turn. On the evening of the 19th of Thermidor the jailer appeared. He had no list. He said, simply:

"Citoyenne Beauharnais, orders have come. You are free."

At last! She was as weak in the presence of joy as she had been in her moments of despair; she fainted, and they crowded around her. But she recovered almost at once, got up, thanked all who had helped her, with the graciousness that was always her greatest charm, and, after having put powder and rouge on her cheeks, she moved, still tottering a little, toward freedom.

Outside, the end of an August evening still left the city under a pall of heat. A gray mist tarnished the sky. A faint breeze brought Rose-Josephine the scent of the flowers in the near-by gardens of the Luxembourg, and cooled her neck, no longer covered by her hair, which

had been cut short in prison. She felt the caress of the breeze with a delicious surprise.

She walked along in a daze, her thoughts in a mad confusion. But, little by little, the truth became clear to her. She was seeing the sunlight again, she was breathing the air of freedom. She was alive!

It seemed to her that at last her body was being emptied of the shadows the days of terror had poured into it, that nightmares, vanishing like ghosts, were leaving her free. She was at peace; breathing in the soft air she was conscious of an overpowering love for the world to which she had been restored.

She gave no thought to the fact that she was widowed, without means; that she had two children; that she did not know where to-morrow's food was coming from. She thought only of the free coursing of her blood in her veins, the beating of her heart, the rise and fall of her breast as she breathed—all those inner voices that told her:

"Death has passed you by! Life is in you—it is beautiful, it is good. Learn how to enjoy its fullness—never let it cloy!"



Barras

INFIDELITY — A CRUEL FINANCIAL EMBARRASSMENT
HUSBAND OR PROTECTOR
A FRUITFUL APPROACH TO BARRAS

IT was ten o'clock in the morning. Rose-Josephine was still in bed when Marie Lanoy came to tell her that General Hoche wanted to see her.

"It's too early!" said Josephine. "This is no time to visit a lady. Did you ask him if he couldn't come back later?"

"Surely I did, but he says he must speak to you upon a matter of great importance. Besides, he seemed to me to be in a bad humor, Madame."

"Very well, then — let him come in."

Quickly she reached for mirror and comb, did her hair, and donned a lace cap. There was a knock; the soldier's big form appeared in the door.

"Good morning, Rose!" he said. "Excuse me for disturbing you so early, but I have come to say good-by."

She pricked up her ears.

"You're going away?"

"At once. I have been appointed to the command of the army at Cherbourg, and I am leaving to take my post."

"I am glad for you, Lazare, but sorry on my own account. Then — shall I see no more of you?"

"Obviously — at least, for some months."

"You take that very casually, Lazare! How cold you are toward me! Why are you angry with me? Aren't you even going to kiss me?"

Thereupon he took her hand and, carelessly, carried it to his lips. There was constraint between them. The Creole realized that he had something of importance to tell her.

"Darling," she said, "you worry me. You speak of our separation with such indifference! Do you forget what ties we have formed, all that we suffered together, the happy nights I have given you since I was released from that hell?"

"No, Rose," he said, soberly, "I forget nothing."

"Then — what have I done? Oh, I can see that you are vexed with me! You don't love me as I love you — you —"

She didn't finish. Hoche burst into laughter, the laughter of a big man that shook the windows.

"Oh, I beg you not to talk to me of your love, my dear."

"What?" she exclaimed. "I don't understand —"

"Listen, Rose," said the general, his eyes inflamed. "Let's deal with things as they are. You have been kind to my aide-de-camp — and I know it!"

"What do you mean?"

"Don't force me to give details. When I say 'kind' — oh, you understand!"

"It's not true, Lazare! Some one has slandered me! Are you to believe everything people say about me?"

"No, but this idiot boasted, and in such detail that I couldn't doubt. And I have heard of an Alsatian, a groom, but a handsome man. You chose well!"

"Lazare — this is frightful! You didn't believe that? A groom! It's infamous! I'm miserably unhappy."

"Oh, well, when it comes to that, I haven't paid much attention to these tale bearers, at least as far as the Alsatian is concerned. I hope I may still count on you to maintain your self-respect. Observe, Rose — I'm not reproaching you in the least. You are free — but so am I, thank God! But, even so, you might have waited until I had gone!"

"Oh, I don't know what made me!" sobbed Josephine. "Forgive me, Lazare. I was mad! Oh, it only happened once — a single time — I swear it!"

Hoche's face cleared. He was pleased with himself. This break was going to come about as pleasantly as possible. He had wanted it for some time. Rose-Josephine, decidedly, cost him too much. She made continual demands for money, as if she had no idea of its worth. For the moment, the confused and guilty young woman was taking their separation as the appropriate punishment for her offense. He felt disposed to make a generous gesture.

"Listen, Rose — let's say no more of this unpleasant incident — eh? I'm going away, but I know how modest your means are. Will you entrust your son Eugene to me? I will take him on my staff — he's a fine youngster."

"Lazare — thank you. You are kind — forgive me. But am I not even to write to you?"

"Oh, by all means, but nothing imprudent, please — remember that I am married."

"Oh, I know that only too well!"

She bit her lips in distress. More than once, in the last few weeks, she had flattered herself that she had brought him to the point of being willing to consider a divorce, but he had always refused. He clung to his young wife.

"You must excuse me, my friend," he said. "It's time for me to go. Will you send Eugene to me, then, immediately after lunch?"

They looked sadly at one another, knowing that nothing remained to be said between them.

"Good-by, Rose! I wish you good luck."

"Au revoir, my friend! Kiss me for the last time. When you are far away, think a little of your Rose. Whatever you think, she has, none the less, loved you well."

He made a gesture that was an invitation to calmness and resignation. Rose-Josephine sighed. The door, closing after Hoche, seemed to be turning a new page of the book of her life.

Seated at her desk, pen in hand, Rose-Josephine was performing a task little to her taste, but highly necessary just then. She was going over the household accounts.

"Gauze for three bonnets: 100 livres. 12 handkerchiefs for Hortense: 700 livres. A baptiste dress: 2500. My good Lanoy — 2500 for a baptiste dress — aren't you mistaken?"

"No, Madame, and even so the dressmaker cut 200 francs from the bill."

"It's frightful! Four pairs of silk stockings: 1800 livres! Two young turkeys: 500 livres. Two turkeys! I hope to Heaven that we shan't soon be unable to eat at all! Where am I to find all this money?"

"Not only this, but I must tell Madame that for two

months Gontier, the butler, and Agatha, the chambermaid, haven't had their wages. They would like to have a little on account. But, if Madame is short—perhaps I could lend her some money? I have some savings. Madame must not make herself ill."

"My excellent Lanoy! Will you save my life again? I'll make it up to you! You're always giving. . . . Ah, you don't know, though, how terrible it is not to be rich."

Pressed by her creditors she was again living from day to day, by recourse to all sorts of expedients. The cost of living, owing to the depreciation of the paper currency, went up every week. Bread cost 60 francs a pound, meat sold for twice as much. One hesitated to change one's shirt, for to have it washed cost a crown.

She pondered, irritated by her impotence to mend her situation. Was this accursed money always, then, to worry her? Not for a long time had she received anything from Martinique. There was civil war there, and, moreover, the English were in command of the sea. She maintained herself only by constant loans. But the more complacent bankers finally grew impatient, and gave way to usurers. She had to take counsel at once, and, cost what it might, mend her unpleasant estate.

She stood up. A large mirror placed at her left showed her her silhouette. She smiled at her perfect figure, at the grace of her movements, at the divine proportions of her body. But, nearing the glass, she looked at her face uneasily. It had lost its freshness. During her stay in prison an invisible stamp seemed to have been placed upon her. The marks of that experience remained in the corners of her eyes, in the folds of her mouth, in her round throat.

Sadly she had to admit it: only the art of powdering

and painting herself, the knowing play of her eyes, long lashes, arched eyebrows, still kept her beautiful.

Here was a warning. She had two children, and was almost destitute. It was high time to think of providing for the future. For how many years longer could she count upon this beauty, which was her surest, her only, weapon? Ah, this time she must choose well! No longer could she afford to make mistakes. The protector who was about to offer himself she must make sure of. Husband or lover, young or old, noble or commoner, that needn't matter! She demanded, in advance only that he have a double quality: wealth and generosity.

The dream that for her had always seemed incapable of being translated into reality! To have money in her hands, her pockets, her strong box; to have only to draw upon an inexhaustible supply of gold; to be free from constant worry about money, which destroys the taste for love and pleasure! No longer to have to stop to think before buying six pots of cold cream at a time from Mme. Lisfrand, at the Palais-Royal! To be able to despoil, without worry or remorse, little Eulalie, the dealer in frivolous trifles, at the Galeries-Égalité!

Who was he, this man already assured of her esteem, who was prepared to assure the comfort, the luxury, the peace of her future life, and, before everything, the gratification of her lightest as well as her most costly caprices?

She sought him in her mind, that mind which was so inept in doing sums, but so clever in observing the features of men, and those details that betray opulence and poverty. . . .

Tallien? Not to be thought of. He had just married Madame de Fontenay, his mistress, for whom he had

risked his life in the struggle with Robespierre. He was mad about her. Barrère? Oh, no doubt. . . . But could she recapture him? The fact that he had done nothing to help to free her from the Carmelites was not encouraging. Sieyes? He was a little too angular. Besides, he was an unfrocked priest, he might resume his soutane. Ouvrard? Ah, he would be the ideal protector! A banker, the size of whose fortune no one knew! But he had a hundred women already, this financier who kept politicians and soldiers in his pocket. It was said that Madame Tallien already had an eye on his money-bags.

He often went to Barras', Josephine thought, suddenly, and, at Barras', perhaps. . . . Barras? Barras! She stopped, checked by the name.

She reflected. He had just been made military dictator. He was master of the republic, dispenser of offices and of favors. Moreover, he was a good looking man, and a susceptible one.

"Barras!" she murmured, tempted. "Well — and why not?"

He bowed before her with the grace of a nobleman of the old régime.

"Citoyenne Beauharnais, you are welcome!" he said. "The day that brings me the pleasure of knowing you will remain among those most precious to me. I will not make a secret of it that I have heard a great deal of you. But all the compliments I have heard cannot equal the truth that is revealed by your presence!"

Rose-Josephine bowed in her turn, and smiled cleverly; it was a smile that, without spoiling the grace of her mouth, enabled her to hide her bad teeth.

"You embarrass me, General," she said. "I didn't expect so much indulgence from the man who presides over the destiny of France."

"That is too much to say, citoyenne. Does not the Republic desire the devotion of the most obscure of its citizens? As for me, I am her humblest servant."

In a blue frock coat, nankeen trousers, and turned down boots, the lower part of his face, the features of which were still noble, hidden by a high linen stock, he leaned carelessly against the mantel of his office. Most favorably impressed by him, Josephine looked at this slender and elegant man, who had received her with so much courtesy.

"General," she said, "if I have ventured to disturb you, it is because necessity has driven me. Your support —"

"Citoyenne Beauharnais, I thank you for this visit. My protection is always available to beauty in distress and unjustly persecuted."

With his keen black eyes he looked at his visitor, and had to admit that he found her to his taste. Under a cashmere shawl she wore a muslin skirt, slit at the side, and a tunic of mauve linen, cut very low, and caught at the shoulders by old cameo brooches. Her short hair was cut *à la Titus*, and light buskins, attached halfway to her knees by gold tassels, shod her feet. She brought a scent of jasmine.

"General," she said, "perhaps you don't know the precarious situation in which I was left at my husband's death."

"General Beauharnais was a worthy man," he said, "and the republic suffered by his loss."

"Doubtless, General — and I know it better than any one else, as I have suffered most. I am widowed now."

I have two children to bring up, and a large house to maintain. Believe me, these are not light responsibilities for a solitary woman."

"And yet, Citoyenne," said Barras, rather impertinently, "I have heard that Hoche . . ."

"Hoche!" she cried, blushing. "Who has said that to you? He has never been more than my friend. If he has helped me a little it was because of my husband, whom he knew."

"I have never doubted that."

"Besides, he is married," she went on, and, drawing her shawl about her she caused a strong breath of perfume to make its way toward the sensitive nostrils of the dictator.

"Yes. But, Citoyenne — how may I be of use to you?"

"General, since my arrest and that of my husband, seals have remained on my apartment in the Rue Saint-Dominique. I have furniture there, my linen and things belonging to my children. I have urgent need of them all. Couldn't you arrange to have the seals removed? You would be doing me a great service."

"Such action must be taken by the Committee of Public Safety," said Barras, "but as a favor to you it will be easy for me to say a word in your behalf."

"Oh, thank you, General! Evidently they were right when they told me of your goodness and your kindness. What I ask is, after all, only justice. You know that all my husband's property was confiscated. That was an iniquitous piece of severity. And I am sure you agree with me. Couldn't I, in common equity, obtain its restoration?"

"I ask this of you for the sake of my children — and

a little for my own. I am without means, the children are innocent. How am I to provide for their education? I am already obliged to go without many things myself. Would you believe it? Yesterday I couldn't go to a ball, for lack of a proper dress! It would be a good deed, and I would be so grateful to those who helped me. . . ."

She bathed him in the tempting light of her eyes, and caressed him with her Creole voice, the r's rolling softly, like the sound of kisses. Moved and tempted, Barras murmured:

"I understand your predicament, Citoyenne. Believe me, I shall do all I can, but the matter is a delicate one. It is still, in my opinion, a little too soon—it will be wiser to wait."

"Ah, no matter! The hope you give me will let me be patient."

She turned in her chair, as if relieved, and crossed her legs, frankly. Barras could see a delicate foot, a perfectly turned calf, and the beginnings of a thigh that gave the richest promise.

"Decidedly she is pretty, and even more perfectly formed than she is pretty," thought Barras, suddenly seized by desire. And, anxious to testify to his regard for the charming woman who pleaded with him, he said, aloud: "I am distressed, Citoyenne Beauharnais, not to be able to satisfy your requests at once. But if there is some lesser thing you care to ask of me, I shall accomplish the impossible to secure it for you."

"I don't know—General—I don't know—You really overwhelm me! It is difficult to choose. Still, there is one thing. I wonder if I dare ask? Well—I will risk it. My husband, when he gave up his command with the Army

of the Rhine, left his horses and carriages behind. The animals were his own. Could I be recompensed for their loss? Wouldn't that be legitimate?"

Barras thought over her request.

"It would, perhaps, be difficult to get the money for you, but I think I see what can be arranged. What would you say if, in exchange, the republic gave you a carriage and two horses?"

Rose-Josephine regarded him with covetous eyes.

"Two horses? A carriage? For me?"

"Why not? A young woman like you needs a carriage to make her calls and maintain her position. It will cost you nothing. The republic certainly owes you that much compensation. Trust me! I will attend to the matter with the Committee of Public Safety."

Rose-Josephine had risen.

"Ah, General — neither I nor my children will ever forget your goodness! I am in despair. How can I ever repay you? General, at least do me the honor of coming to see me, as a friend. I live at No. 371, Rue de l'Université. You promise?"

He escorted her to the door, stroking her bare arms with a rather feverish familiarity. Suddenly she turned to him, and, letting her warm breath touch his cheek:

"You will come, won't you?" she said.

Barras, greatly stirred, closed his eyes.

"I promise, my dear friend," he said.

Outside, Rose-Josephine, satisfied, took a voluptuous pleasure in the freshness of a September evening.

"I have him!" she thought, proudly.



A Soirée at the Hotel de Chantereine

A BRILLIANT SOCIETY — MME. TALLIEN — POLITENESS IN LOVE

A SATYR — GARAT SINGS A ROMANCE

A SHAMELESS SPECTACLE

A GLOW in the brilliance of lighted chandeliers, the two small drawing rooms of the mansion were crowded with guests; young women dressed, or, rather, undressed, in the fashion of the day; dandies in black stocks, square coats and English waistcoats, politicians affecting carelessness of attire; red caps mingling with red nails.

Rose-Josephine, wearing a tunic like that of Ceres in silver blue, her hair curled, shod with blue sandals, did the honors of her house and was ready with a smile and a word of welcome for every one.

A little apart, standing by a serving table, laden with refreshments, Barras showed signs of impatience. His black eyes never left the door. It was plain that he expected some one who was late in arriving. Rose approached him, and looking at him with gentle submissiveness, whispered:

"Well, darling, are you pleased with me? Look! Here are all our friends, gathered around us."

"You deserve to be complimented, Rose. Your party is beginning very well. You are a perfect hostess."

"I would do much more than this to please you! I want so much always to have you with me. Aren't you comfortable here?"

"Perfectly so," said Barras, but his voice was indifferent, and he still kept his eyes on the door.

"You ought to spend more time here, instead of gadding about as you do in the cafés and the pot houses. Oh, I'm not scolding you, but it worries me on your account. It seems you were at the Palais-Royal, only yesterday, after midnight — with some girls! No — I'm not jealous. And you are intimate, they tell me, with Saul, the keeper of the café at the Tuileries, who formerly sold boxes of tallow to cure kidney trouble. You lower yourself, my dear, con-sorting with the canaille."

Barras looked annoyed.

"Rose — please don't make a scene here! It's not the time. You have other things to do."

She was silent, sighed, and stood still for a moment, thinking. She felt that their affair was drawing to a close. It had not, after all, lasted very long.

After Rose-Josephine's visit to him Barras had not waited long to find out in what coinage his debtor was prepared to pay him. She was clever; she knew that the general was much sought after by women. So she had not postponed the payment very long, and had become, not without enjoyment, the mistress of this man, who though blasé, was an expert lover — fully intending, however, to make use of him.

But, alas, after a few weeks, she had been obliged to admit herself disillusioned and deceived. Barras was venial, a gambler, lecherous, inconstant — though less attracted by young girls than by the beauties of the old

nobility who had offered their noble charms to the Jacobins to save their heads. Above all, he seemed determined to retain his freedom, at any cost. And so, each day, she realized that he was slipping a little further from her control.

The dictator, for his part, found her rather expensive, and disposed to cling to him with a tenacity he found it a little hard to attribute wholly to her love for him. . . .

To be sure, he was generous; on that score Rose-Josephine could not complain. But how did he pay? Though he sometimes gave her money, more often it was a store of sugar or candles, a lot of blankets or cartridges, which came to him mysteriously, and which she had to turn into cash immediately to pay her tradesmen. He was always engaged in deals, concerned in strange enterprises, selling his influence, constantly seeking clandestine profits.

Still, thanks to him, Rose-Josephine had been able to move from the Rue de l'Université and install herself in this small mansion in the Rue Chantierine, to furnish it quite acceptably, add to the number of her servants, and send Eugene and Hortense to boarding school at St. Germain. Ah, if she had been able to induce him to marry her!

But there was no question of that. To-morrow, beyond a doubt, Barras would tire of her, and once more there would be uncertainty, fear for the future. Her anxiety must have been evident in her expression, for her lover said:

"Rose, I want nothing better than to stay with you. Forgive me if I have worried you—don't think of that again. They are looking for you—"

"You're right, my friend. Excuse me. I must see to my guests."

Just then the door opened. Walking with the measured and harmonious tread of a goddess, a young woman of almost unbelievable beauty appeared. A murmur of admiration spread through the room. Her sensuous little mouth, her dark and passionate eyes, the pure oval shape of her face, the thin, Grecian line of her nose, her perfect figure, the grace of her whole body seemed all to have been made to charm those who saw her. This was Mme. Tallien.

She wore a powdered blonde wig, and a Greek robe, in peach blossom muslin, left her admirable shoulders bare and disclosed a firm but opulent bosom. An enameled golden snake, in the head of which an emerald was set, was curved about her left arm.

From afar, not moving toward her, Tallien looked morosely at his wife. But Rose-Josephine had already hurried to meet her guest, and took her in her arms.

"You're here at last, Theresa! How late you are, dearest! Let me see you. Heavens, you are beautiful! But tell me — who did your hair so beautifully?"

"Gossec, darling. If you want one like it — "

Suddenly Mme. Tallien started; some one had put a hand on her shoulder and was greeting her without ceremony. She turned; it was Barras.

"Ah! Good evening, General. You startled me."

Barras was like a new man. A sudden pleasure had transfigured him. His febrile fingers tried to touch her breasts.

"You would? Rascal!" she said, giving his hand a playful tap with her fan. She laughed, amused by this

passionate desire which she knew to be rising in him and maddening him as he stood beside her.

"Have pity on us, beautiful enchantress!" said Barras. "We are at your mercy. Your beauty devastates our hearts as Attila devastated the world! In the hearts it conquers love can not grow again. . . ."

Rose-Josephine had withdrawn. She was not jealous of Mme. Tallien. On the contrary, the two were devoted, for the Creole could not forget that it was because of this friend, and in order to save her head from the block, that Tallien had overthrown the triumvirs, saving, at a blow, the lives of thousands of prisoners. Had not the people, recognizing this, named her "Notre Dame de Thermidor"? Never had a name been better deserved! So, now, it was always with wonder, with emotion, with a gratitude always fresh, that the Creole recalled that she owed her life to the miraculous beauty of this young woman.

Since their release they had come to know one another, in a growing intimacy. They were not envious of one another's clothes, nor did they compete for the attentions of men. On the contrary, they supported one another, and complemented one another. One was more beautiful and dashing, the other more gracious, clever, and the possessor to a supreme degree of a genius for intrigue. They felt themselves kindred spirits, sharing similar interests and preoccupied alike with the desire to extract from love all the joys of life.

A loud burst of laughter sounded in the small, semi-circular drawing room. Arnault, the poet, Real and Mme. de Navailles, the former Duchess d'Aiguillon, were listening attentively to some story of Mme. Chateaurenauds. She, a pretty woman, with a frank countenance,

delighted in telling questionable stories, and told barrack-room anecdotes with the innocent manner of a cherub.

"May one hear?" asked Rose-Josephine, who, interested, had drawn near.

Real laughed, and Arnault shook his right hand in a gesture of refusal; the fine gold chain on his wrist, attached to one finger, tinkled gently.

"No, Citoyenne," he said, "these are matters too shocking for your pretty ears."

"Oh, come, Arnault," said Mme. Chateaurenaud, "don't bore her. We were speaking of the Representative Freron."

"Freron? Oh, yes — why, I don't see him here."

"And for excellent reasons, my dear friend."

"Has anything unpleasant happened to him?"

"Something very pleasant, you might better say! I hear upon excellent authority that he spent last night with Mme. Hamelin — and that he paid her his respects six times."

"Six times!" murmured Rose-Josephine, dreamily. Her mouth watered. . . .

"No less! This Freron is extraordinary. I would never have believed it of him. However, if his exertions tired him so much that he is, perhaps, sleeping now, we must agree that they have had no such effect on the object of his devotion. Look at her — she is beautiful this evening."

All eyes turned, curiously and enviously, toward Mme. Hamelin who, seated near a window, was talking to Tallien and Garat, the singer. A Creole from Santo Domingo, she had an ivory skin and sparkling eyes, and might have been called pretty, in spite of her irregular features. She was witty, and had a supple and beautifully formed body.

She knew this, and did not care for any one to be left in doubt of it, so she had dispensed, this evening, with a chemise, and wore only a gauzy dress, under which gleamed her thighs, circled with diamonds.

A satisfied and happy languor modified her ordinary manner, which was aggressive. Garat was begging her to dance a gavotte or a scarf dance, a most agreeable and artistic sight, since her body, in the dance, was both graceful and agile. And, as Tallien urged her:

"My poor friends—don't you hear anything?" she asked. "All that is old and out of style. It's the waltz, that comes from Germany, that is the rage now. Ah, that is the delightful dance! A dance in which one moves, body close to body, lips pressed to lips, a dance of love!"

"Then you should dance it admirably!" said Barras, who had come up.

Mme. Hamelin put out her tongue to rebuke his impertinence, when the door opened to admit Freron. His face was sensual, his pointed ears were hairy, and as he advanced, unsteadily, his distended eyes showed his regard for Mme. Hamelin.

"Feron!" Real hailed him, mischievously. "Mme. Hamelin wants you to dance a waltz with her. It seems it is a dance of love."

Freron, with a grimace, turned away. Real caught his wrist.

"I hear that you fell in love, after your trip to Toulon, with a girl of good family. Pauline, I think—Pauline Buonaparte. Ladies—look at this Adonis—he debauches young girls!"

Freron's eyes were inflamed.

"A good looking wench, citizen! I hope you'll always have her match in your bed!"

Passing on, his look suddenly angry, he went toward Carnot and Barras, who were discussing politics. Carnot, with a head like a bulldog's, a bad mouth, a short neck, always seemed ready to attack his questioner.

"You know that the aristocrats and the Jacobins are rearing their heads again," he said to Barras.

"As for the Jacobins, they're not to be feared."

"Perhaps not. But the royalist sections are stirring, Barras! They accuse you of wanting to restore the reign of Terror. General Menou ought to deal with them."

"H'mm. Menou! He's hardly to be depended upon. He lacks energy."

"I tell you, Barras, that he's a traitor! One of these days there'll be an uprising, and we'll share Robespierre's fate."

"Barras," Freron interrupted to say, "you ought to take Menou's place."

The dictator was thoughtful. He did not feel that he was cut out for a military career. A sword suited him no better than a plow. He looked at the two members of the Convention.

"No doubt — but I have more important things to do."

"But we must have some one trustworthy," said Carnot.

"I have had that in mind. I have an ambitious young officer in reserve. He is devoted to me, he owes everything to me. When the time comes I need only give him the sign."

"What's his name?"

"Buonaparte. Napoleon Buonaparte."

Freron's eyes gleamed.

"An excellent choice," he approved.

Meanwhile Mme. Tallien had cornered Real.

"Tell me, Real," she asked. "What is the latest quotation on sugar? And do you know about candles, too?"

Real smiled cynically.

"Dear friend — so lovely a pair of lips, made for love, discussing the price of candles!"

"I'm serious, Real! I know of a chance for a great coup. Another thing. Do you know any one who might take 10,000 pairs of shoes? They are at a druggist's. I bought them, and want to get rid of them. Of course, you would have your share of the profit."

"I don't know any one — no. But, perhaps Carnot might take them for the army?"

"Carnot? He's hard to approach! However, I'll talk to Barras about it."

Louise Compont, the maid, was passing, with a tray laden with refreshments. Leaving Carnot, Barras went to her.

"Theresa," he said, "may I — ? What can I offer you?"

"Oh, my friend, no wine, at any rate, on account of my poor nerves! I'd rather have a little Kirsch."

He filled a glass, which she drained at one draught.

"Another?"

"Please. I like it."

She swallowed the second as easily. Barras refilled the glass a third time, and touched the spot her lips had flavoured; then drank with a rapt expression, looking at her intently. Suddenly a sharp cry astonished them all.

"What's the matter? What has happened?" exclaimed Rose-Josephine.

It was only Louise Compoin. Freron, instead of taking a drink from her tray as she passed, had seized her breast. They reproved the satyr. Then conversation was resumed. It dealt with the possibilities of profit, with the exchange, with love. The women, never bored, seeking new sensations, greedy for money, passed easily from one subject to another.

"Garat! Garat!"

Mme. de Chateaurenaud, Mme. de Navailles, Mme. Tallien and Rose-Josephine surrounded the singer, pleading with him.

"Garat, darling — You won't go without singing for us? Garat — La Gasconne!"

Garat, the fashionable troubadour of the day, received their entreaties with disdain. He was tired, he said, of charming these women with the words of his songs.

"Come, Garat!" said Mme. Hamelin, with a smile that promised everything, "do it for me."

The singer rose, nonchalantly. With measured gestures he arranged his light coat, his cravat, and his curled wig. Then, like a god plagued by the prayers of his worshipers, he approached the piano, where Mme. Chateaurenaud had seated herself to accompany him. Some one coughed; he frowned terribly. Finally, facing an unworthy audience, he sang, in a silence like that of the tomb:

Bouton de Rose

Tu seras plus heureux que moi . . .

The air charmed them all. Rose-Josephine congratulated herself because Garat had condescended to let him-

self be persuaded to sing. Her guests would carry away a still happier memory of her party. Barras would be pleased.

Barras? But where was he? And Mme. Tallien? She saw neither one nor the other. Furtively, she looked about the room. She could not find them.

Garat finished his *romanza* amid enthusiastic applause.

Profiting by the excitement, Rose-Josephine went stealthily toward her boudoir, which was next to the drawing rooms. A wretched suspicion had struck her to the heart.

Carefully she raised the curtain and ventured to look in. One look was enough. A large mirror, standing on the mahogany commode, had shown her the shameless sight of Mme. Tallien, in the arms of Barras, their lips joined, while she surrendered all the secrets of her body to the frantic hands of the dictator.



The General's Sword

A FAMILY SWORD — IT BECOMES A QUESTION OF BONAPARTE

A VISIT TO THE GENERAL OF THE VENDEMAIRE

THE FIRST SPARK

ENTERING the small drawing room the commissioner had bowed.

"Excuse me, Citoyenne, for disturbing you," he said, "but my duty requires it. I have heard that you have weapons in your house. Your husband was a General."

"Yes, Commissioner. But I don't see why —"

"How? Don't you know that after the rising of those accursed royalists on the 13th of this month, the government took precautions? The Committee of Public Safety has just ordered that all Parisians, without exceptions, must surrender all arms of which they are possessed."

"Excuse me, citizen. Women do not concern themselves much with such matters. Yes. I have here a sword and some pistols."

"Will you be good enough to turn them over to me?"

Josephine rose to obey this order when little Eugene Beauharnais, who had been a silent witness of the scene, rose in his turn.

"Mother — are you going to — to give up my father's sword?"

"Certainly, my dear — since I must."

"No, Mother — you can't do that!"

Astonished, she looked at her son. He was pale and trembling. What had struck the boy? Was he about to make a scene over some unhappy objects, of which, in fact, she was glad to rid herself? She stepped forward. To stop her Eugene flung himself between her and the door.

"No, Mother — I beg you — don't give it up! Remember that it is my father's sword! Citizen — you can't mean to make me give it up into strange hands!"

"Alas, my young friend, I don't count. I can only carry out my orders."

"Citizen commissioner, this sword is that of General Beauharnais. He was commander-in-chief of the Army of the Rhine — don't forget that. It is sacred to me. No living person but myself shall touch it! My father was a hero. I will not have the relics he has left me dishonored through any fault of mine! To give up the sword of a dead man, one's father's sword, wouldn't that be the basest cowardice? If you take this sword from me, citizen, you must take my life with it."

Rose-Josephine was surprised. The commissioner, moved and astonished, looked at this little chap, fourteen years old, who stood before him, pale, trembling, his eyes full of tears, resolute to die rather than to give up this fragment of steel his father's hands had held.

"Listen, Citoyenne," said the commissioner, in a conciliatory voice, "I understand your dilemma. This sword is, after all, less a weapon than an heirloom. I shall be glad to let you keep it, but on condition that you obtain the authorization of the general in command."

"Oh, thank you, citizen!" said Eugene. "You are

kind. I will go to the general at once and I shall plead with him so that he will have to listen to me and grant me this favor. He will understand, I am sure."

He rushed to his room and returned with the great sword, the hilt of which came to his shoulder. He went out. An hour later he returned, brandishing his sword like a trophy.

"Mother — see! I gained my point, I knew I would. Here is the permit. General Bonaparte himself gave it to me. He kissed me. Ah, I shall remember him! But perhaps you ought to go to thank him, too — it would be well worth the effort."

Rose-Josephine listened to her son, less pleased by his success than by his own delight in it.

"I will go to see him to-morrow, dear, I promise you."

She thought it over. To tell the truth, she would be glad to pay this visit. It was a good opportunity to make the acquaintance of General Bonaparte, whom the insurrection of the 13th. Vendemiaire had just raised to power in Paris. It was he who had saved the Convention from the ambush of the royalists and insured the safety of the republic, upon a memorable day. They said great things of him. Barras held him in high esteem for the energy with which he had suppressed the revolt.

And — might it not be a good idea to count among her friends the general second in command of the Army of the Interior? One could never have too many relations of that sort when one wanted favors, and, in case of need, orders for supplies for the army.

Bonaparte! That name echoed in her mind. Where had she seen him? Ah! She remembered. It had been at a soirée at Mme. Tallien's, in the Allée des Veuves, near

the Champs Elysées. She could see him now. A short, pale officer, badly dressed, who, shy, even a little sad and uncouth, stayed in a corner. He had worn fatigue boots and a well worn uniform, on which the epaulets of a brigadier were loosely stitched. A pitiful figure! But what a flame had burned in his eyes!

Once Mme. Tallien had spoken to him, and he had taken advantage of the opportunity to ask her to use her influence with the quartermaster's department to persuade it to supply him with the cloth for a uniform. It had been a favor. But he had known that Mme. Tallien was powerful as well as kind, and he had not been ashamed to confess that he was only on half pay.

Showing her the holes in his coat, he had displayed his poverty without abasement; then, suddenly animated, he had asked the ladies to show him their hands, and he had told their fortunes — and good fortunes! — with the utmost seriousness.

He was, truly, a strange little man!

Her carriage took her to the Rue Neuve-des-Capucins. She was admitted at once, and he came to greet her.

She recognized him immediately. Here was the same pale, bony face, the same tight mouth under an imperious nose. But he had changed. He moved with ease; he seemed to have lost his shyness. He was better dressed, with new boots and a uniform which, though badly cut, showed off his figure to better advantage.

"General!" she said. "I have come to thank you for what you did for my little Eugene."

"Oh, Citoyenne — please! Any one in my place would

have done the same thing. It seemed to mean so much to him to keep that sword. He was right."

"He talks constantly of you. You have become his hero," she said, laughing.

"I'm glad. I like children very much, and your son is a nice boy."

"Isn't he, General?"

"And, now that I have seen you, I know why I found him so appealing. The mother of a son with so fine a sense of honor must be a noble woman."

Rose-Josephine smiled. After all this little general knew how to pay a compliment. He looked at her, plainly flattered because this young woman of whom every one spoke had taken the trouble to come to see him. She was so well turned out, dressed in such perfect taste, from her cape, trimmed with marten, to her silver-blue slippers! With throbbing nostrils he sensed, with an extraordinary emotion, the scent of jasmine that every movement of hers caused to reach him.

"General," she said, "I am very glad to know you. Do you know that I have heard a great deal about you? I know that you worked wonders at the siege of Toulon, and that you have just saved the republic. No, no — don't deny it! My friend Barras keeps me well informed of what goes on."

Bonaparte frowned. With a nervous gesture he pushed his hair back, behind his ears.

"Barras?" he said, harshly.

"Yes. He holds you in great esteem. You have a devoted friend in him."

He didn't answer. Silence fell between them. With

a sure, feminine intuition she thought: "He doesn't like Barras! That's strange."

She held out her hand to take her leave.

"Au revoir, General! I know your time is valuable. But I hope we may see one another again before long. I live in the Rue Chantereine. You will always be welcome there."

"Truly, madame, you honor me."

"You must promise to come to see me, General. I will introduce you to some old friends of mine, and you will meet some well-known people in my house. Tallien, Freron, Gohier, Carnot —"

Bonaparte pricked up his ears.

"Carnot?" he said.

"He's not what one could call amiable, but they say he is a great patriot. So—it's understood? I can count on you? Eugene will be delighted when I tell him you are coming. And you will also see my little Hortense. She has lovely blue eyes."

"Madame, if they are like yours, I am sure I shall like your daughter very well."

He opened the door, and bowed. As she was going she turned to him, and said, archly:

"Oh, General—are you to be feared, then, in other places as on the battlefield?"

He blushed; when he was ready to answer she had already gone.

Left alone, Bonaparte felt himself suddenly exhilarated; he was pleased with himself; he was almost happy, as if the air he breathed, the objects around him, still retained something of the brightness of eye, the grace of movement, the scent, of the woman who had visited him.

Within the week he returned her call. Rose-Josephine invited him to come as often as he pleased.

The affability and the smiling welcome of the Creole had put him at his ease at once. He gained in self-confidence when he was with her. She had presented him to her intimates, to the Marquis de Caulaincourt and the Marquis de Segur, noblemen in powdered wigs who still retained the manners and the courtesy of an older France.

He needed no urging, and, thereafter, he took advantage of every moment of leisure to hurry to her house. He was delighted with the atmosphere of the old régime which his hostess knew so well how to retain. Dazzled, he expanded in this world, so new to him, of which he had so often dreamed at Brienne, and in which he was treated with such deference. He was infinitely grateful to this handsome woman who had marked him for the receipt of her favor, and in whose advances he was still unable to distinguish between policy and a tender interest in him.

How she stood out, for him, among the women he knew — Mme. Tallien, Mme. Hamelin, and all the rest! These others were, perhaps, better looking, bolder, but they seemed to him creatures who had succeeded by intrigue, by vulgar transactions, by improper compromises of all sorts. No! No matter what they did, they would never have Rose-Josephine's charm, her indefinable and seductive manner of a great lady, that combination of beauty and tact against which the hardest and most austere spirit was helpless.

Moreover, her house had other interesting and attractive features. In addition to the noblemen, one met there men of high rank, well able to advance one's for-

tunes. A brief chat in its drawing room, over a glass of Maraschino, could do more to increase a man's standing with those in power than a score of official calls.

Yet, little by little, Bonaparte came to like best to visit the house at those times when he knew he would find Rose-Josephine alone. His devotion did not seem to displease her. She seemed even to encourage him — perhaps with a secret desire to make Barras jealous. But the dictator, far from taking umbrage, urged his mistress not to be too distant with Bonaparte.

"Handle him carefully, my friend," he said to her. "He may be very useful to me. Thanks to me, moreover, the little cockerel may go far."

A sentimental intimacy gradually grew up between the two young people. She found him agreeable, deferential, easily carried away, certainly, but always, none the less, humble and submissive toward her. Curiously she tried to measure the extent of her influence over him, over this new and proud spirit; she took pleasure in educating this young savage, refining his taste, making his character more adaptable.

Amused, she watched his efforts to make himself more attractive; the care he took of his dress, the trouble he took to keep his unruly hair in order, his eagerness to acquire the art of paying her compliments. He loved her; she was sure of that. And his dumb adoration pleased her, secretly, all the more, because it was so rare a thing in her experience. How he trembled! How pale he grew when she let him kiss her arm or her shoulder, or when she allowed him some familiarity! Truly, he kindled at such times!

Often, at night, she faced her undecided face in her mirror.

"Should I yield to him?" she asked herself — already tempted to do so. "He would be so happy! And I? Oh, I wouldn't mind! It would even be amusing! He does amuse me, this little Bonaparte. He's like Puss-in-Boots."



Love

AN INVITATION TO LUNCHEON — VAIN RESISTANCE
TOGETHER ALONE — MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD
THE DECLARATION OF LOVE — ROSE-
JOSEPHINE MAKES ONE MORE MAN HAPPY

A LETTER from her? Was it possible? He turned it over, afraid to open it. Here was a strange thing — this letter, which weighed no more than a bird's feather in his hand, was as heavy in his heart as an iron bar. What did it bring him? With feverish fingers he tore open the envelope.

"You no longer come to see a friend who cares for you. You have forsaken her; you are wrong, for she is tenderly attached to you. Come to-morrow to have lunch with me. I want to see you and talk to you about your affairs. Good night, my friend — a kiss for you."

He closed his eyes, suddenly dizzy. For several days he had struggled against the love he had felt to be rising within him until it was becoming his dominant passion. How he loved her! How he desired those marvelous eyes, that flexible throat, that closed, almost mysterious mouth, all that firm, supple body, the vision of which made his nights sleepless, and deprived him of all serenity and pleasure in his work!

And how he feared this love! Wouldn't it interfere with his power, the clearness of his judgment, injure his career? Though his brain was worn and depressed, he had tried to reason with himself. For more than a week he had not been to her house. But his absence made him suffer too keenly. Must he seek refuge in flight, in absence?

And now—look at this letter! How simple it was, how each phrase went to his heart! She called him back. She might need him. Wasn't that excuse enough for him to give in? Vanquished, he accepted it, happily, as a release.

He couldn't stop kissing the paper, rereading the words she had traced with a careless pen. He had never heard, from her lips, words so tender, so full of promise, as these, it seemed to him. But—a whole day more before he was to see her again! A day! To his impatient spirit it seemed an eternity.

He had dressed with punctilious care. For an hour he, who usually spent only a few minutes in dressing, brushed his rebellious hair. Finally, brushed, combed, even perfumed, he set out, already afraid of being awkward, overcome by the favor she was conferring.

He had passed the carriage entrance of the house, entered. Now he awaited her in the small room, paved with mosaics, which she had turned into her boudoir. His knees were trembling. He would have been calmer on a battlefield.

A door opened; it was she! How beautiful she was! It was as if he were seeing her for the first time. She came toward him, in a transparent gown, a scarf thrown

over her breasts. She seemed scarcely to touch the floor. Her smile deepened the light in her eyes.

"At last, General, here you are! You've become very formal, all at once, if I must invite you by letter! You have neglected me for days—I don't like it! Is my house no longer worthy of your young glory?" There was a touch of malice in her voice.

"Madame—I owe you a thousand apologies! But—I have so much to do—the service—my duties—"

She took his hand and held it; a delicate, small, almost feminine hand, and very cold just then.

"How cold you are, General! Come and warm yourself, at once."

"Madame," he said, suddenly bold, "please don't call me 'General' any more. Aren't we friends? My first name is Napoleon."

"It's a sonorous name—I like it."

Maternally, she made him at home, making him sit in an armchair beside the fireplace, disturbing Fortune, who showed his teeth and growled at the visitor.

"Look—he is jealous!" said Rose-Josephine.

She looked at him attentively. He was even paler than usual. She was conscious, with a rather cruel pleasure, of an emotion which was the greatest tribute a man could pay her. Louise announced that lunch was served. They went into the dining room, an oval chamber the walls of which were decorated with prints. They sat opposite one another at a mahogany table. Flowers gave this tête-à-tête meal a festive air and a look of tender intimacy. The maid served them.

Rose-Josephine only tasted each dish. She had a bird's appetite; very little satisfied her. She really liked only

desserts, sweetmeats, trifles of all sorts. He, too moved to be hungry, tasted with equal indifference a roast, fruits, ices from Velloni's. He had eyes only for this pretty woman, in whose presence he felt himself able to spend whole days without eating at all.

"If you like, my friend," she said, when Louise had begun to clear away, "we will have our coffee in the drawing room. We have things to discuss, I think."

He followed her. Logs burned brightly in the fireplace.

"See," she said, "we have a fire here too. I am so chilly!"

She sat down, raised her dress, carelessly, and exposed her beautiful legs to the warmth of the fire.

"Sit by me," she said.

He sat on a stool, almost at her feet. With an eager delight he enjoyed once more this flowery room, the heavy and perfumed air, and the presence of this lovely woman, which he had believed lost to him.

"A little coffee?" she said, giving him a cup. "Taste it—it comes from home. My parents sent it to me."

He drank the small cup slowly, as if it were a love philter she had given him to enslave him.

"Now," she said, "I want to talk to you seriously, my friend. I think you want a more important post, that will enable you to demonstrate your powers."

"Certainly, Madame, that is my ambition. Here, I am a subordinate, but I believe that if I have the chance, I might do great things for the republic. The East tempts me. That is where we must beat the English."

"I hear upon good authority that certain army commands will soon be vacant."

"The command of an army!" he said, his eyes shining.

"I am telling you a secret. And I must tell you that I have already, without consulting you, spoken to Barras about you."

He jumped up.

"Barras? Barras! No! I don't want to owe anything more to that man! Ask any one else you like, but not him — never him!"

"But how has he angered you? I assure you that he is only too anxious to help you."

This violent hostility toward Barras, which he had displayed before, astonished her. What had he against him? she wondered. They must have been talking to him about her and the dictator. Heavens — was he jealous, like her dog?

"Come," she said, to calm him, "I will obey you. I will deal with Gohier or Carnot. I have occasion to see them for myself."

Already he was humble.

"Oh, thank you, Madame! Excuse my rudeness. You are so good to me! Ah, if you knew how changed everything is since I have come to know you! My childhood was so sad. My father died when he was young — my mother was beset by the cruelest difficulty in bringing us up, my four brothers, my three sisters, and myself. She is a splendid woman! If you knew the struggles she shared with my father, at the head of the Republican force that was trying to save our island from Paoli, who wanted to surrender it to the English!

"Then I went to Brienne. There were years of work, of poverty, of humiliation. I had the constant anguish of being unable to help my relatives. The beginning of

my career in the army was wretched. I was an under-officer, poor, the butt of jokes, of injustice. Then, all at once, fortune brought me across your path!

"It seems to me now that I am guided by a great beacon! Since I have known you I have been successful in everything! I am swept along by a force that is due to your beauty, your kindness, to all the friendship you have given me. Nothing can check this force. You have convinced me that military glory is not everything, that there is something else in the world, only to be given by a woman. My friend—let me call you by that purest of names—do you know what you are to me, how much I owe you?"

Touched, she listened to this little Corsican at her feet, who, equally respectful and violent, covered the hem of her skirt and the hand she had given him with kisses. He spoke well. He was no longer either shy or conventional.

"Please get up. Napoleon—sit by me. There—be sensible. You think too much of me. I am only a woman, like the rest, but I am devoted to my friends, and I try to help them."

He was about to reply, when she rose, and went to a small, marble-topped table, on which stood a flagon and some glasses.

"Would you like to taste a liqueur from the Islands? I adore it. It recalls my whole native land. It seems to me, as I drink it, that I see its clear light again, that I smell its perfume. All my childhood is here!"

She paused, then, her eyes closed, she murmured, in a far-away voice:

"The Island! But you, too, my friend, were born on

an island. Our lot has not been so very different. We have both known other skies, we have crossed the sea. It's a strange, even a mysterious thing, that, having come from so far, we should have met."

He listened, silent in his surprise. Never had she confided in him so tenderly, let him see so much of herself. But she was going on.

"My beautiful country! You will see it some day, perhaps — I hope so. Knowing it, you will like me better, understand me better. You can't imagine what the sun is like down there, or the birds and flowers. Come — I have some things from *Trois Ilets* in my room. I show them only to those who are dear to me."

They climbed the little winding staircase, and, for the first time, she admitted him to her own room. Deeply moved, he looked at the furniture, covered in linen trimmed in red and yellow, at the walls hung high and low with mirrors. Here, several times a day, she undressed, attired herself, here she slept — dreaming, it might be, of him.

She showed him a desk, with mirrors, and with columns of yellow wood from Guadeloupe, stuffed birds, dried flowers. She opened drawers, taking from them necklaces of shells, and naïvely sculptured flints, the story of which she told him with the fresh enjoyment of a little savage princess.

He listened, soothed by her slow voice, as if he were being warmed by a distant, tropical sun. But, behind his back, in the depths of an alcove, always in his consciousness, was the mysterious bed toward which he dared not look. She was holding out to him a miniature painted

on ivory, a portrait of herself in a white dress, seated before her harp.

"Look, Napoleon — is that really I?"

He took the picture in tremulous fingers, staring at it with greedy eyes.

"My friend," she said, seeing that he coveted it, "if you would like it for a souvenir of me, I will give it to you."

"Oh, Madame," he cried, raising it to his lips, "you couldn't make me a lovelier present! I will wear it on my heart, and I swear to you that it will never leave that spot except to be carried to my eyes or my lips!"

Presently she smiled, pointing out the disorder of her drawers.

"Look, my friend — that's all I have of my country! It's so far away! My life has been so troubled. I have not been happy — as you, no doubt know."

She stopped, and took his hand, like one seeking help. He was close to her. The perfume of her body, stronger in this room than elsewhere, overwhelmed him. Under the thin stuff of her gown he could see her long thighs, the firm carriage of her pointed breasts. The faint light coming through the window gilded her hair.

"Yes," she went on, in a low voice, as if she were almost ashamed of her avowal, "I may soon have to go back to the Islands. My parents have great estates there. They are sending for me. Life is hard in Paris for a lonely woman with two children, a woman without protection of any sort. Down there I shall grow old gracefully. You, my friend, will make your way, you will become famous. You won't think of me."

He took her in his arms.

"Josephine — what are you saying? I don't want you to go! I am here to protect you! My love — my life belongs to you — take it! I love you."

Their lips, almost meeting, were still. From the distant street the heavy rumbling of a passing truck reached their ears.

"Josephine — do you believe me? I shall love you so that you will forget the unhappy times. It can't be that you don't trust me, that you don't know that I love you —"

Pressed against him, she didn't resist him; her whole body was shaken. He kissed her forehead, her cheeks, wet with her tears, her eyelids. Suddenly he stifled a cry. He had just conquered a tender, yielding, adept mouth, which taught him the secret of the most marvelous of kisses.

Suddenly, without knowing whether it was he who had led her or she who had guided him to it, they were on the bed, already joined in the most passionate of embraces. . . .



The Proposal of Marriage

INFATUATION — JEALOUSY — BARRAS, THE SCOUNDREL
A PAINFUL EXPLANATION — RECONCILIATION

HE went home late that night, having made his way through a maze of obscure and dirty streets, his burning brow open to the cooling breath of a cold wind. Fully clothed, he flung himself on his bed, afraid of making a gesture that might destroy the enchanted state in which he found himself.

Sleep alone could prolong his dream. But it came slowly. In the middle of the night he rose, and, with a lighted candle, sat at a table. Josephine! He was about to write to her. His thoughts, transcribed on paper, might bring her closer to him. Alas—words fled from his pen; they were cold and treacherous, incapable of catching the rhythm of his heart.

He tore the sheet, lay down again and finally, exhausted, fell asleep. In the morning he awoke, dazzled by his memories. No dawn had ever seemed so beautiful. In a fever of love he rushed to his desk, and, swiftly, without blotting a word, he wrote:

"I awake full of thoughts of you! The vision of you and the intoxicating evening of yesterday have left my senses no repose. Sweet and incomparable Josephine, what

strange effect have you had on my heart? If you are angry, if I see you sad, if you are distressed, my spirit is bowed with grief, and there is no rest for your friend. But is there ever to be any for me, if, mastered by a profound emotion, I press a kiss on your lips, your heart—a flame that consumes me! Ah, last night I learned that your portrait was not you! You are leaving at noon. I shall see you in three hours. Meanwhile, my dearest love, a thousand kisses—but give me none in return, for they set my very blood afire.”

At eight o'clock in the evening he arrived in the Rue de Chantereine, still carried away by the same emotion at the idea that he was about to see her again, to hold her in his arms, that perhaps she might keep him there for another night of love.

“Madame is not here, Louise told him.

“Where has she gone?” he asked, already pale.

“She went out early this afternoon. She took the carriage. I think she was to go to Mme. Tallien’s, and then to the Luxembourg.”

Bonaparte made a gesture of violent aversion.

“The Luxembourg! Then she’s at Barras’!”

“General, if you want to wait, she cannot be much longer now.”

He hesitated for a moment. Should he wait here, walking up and down impatiently, sick with distress and jealousy—and for how long?

“No,” he said, “I will come to-morrow.”

He had already reached the door and the street. But suddenly he stopped, glued to the pavement by a force that mastered his muscles and his will. Fool that he was! Could he go without having seen her, without having

heard the sound of her voice, or receiving the alms of a kiss? Without them, he was sure, sleep would elude him all night long, and until he had seen her again he would be ravaged by anguish, unhappy to the point of tears.

He could no longer do without her. At first he had doubted the evidence of his own senses. Could it be possible? This young woman so used to adulation, so beautiful—his mistress! She had chosen him, among so many men who desired her! He realized it with a tremendous pride, but his knowledge left him no peace.

Hunger for her, for her caresses, possessed him, tortured him. He had a constant need of her, he wanted never to leave her, to breathe in her warmth, to sense the perfume of her, to be able to touch her always, to kiss her, to embrace at any moment that body so submissive, so expert, so generous in giving pleasure, the knowing delight of which ever responded untiringly to his inexperienced ardor.

He took a hundred paces back and forth before the porte-cochère, ornamented with military insignia. But walking scarcely soothed him. Each sound of a carriage stopped him short, ears alert. Was it she? No. A fine rain fell and gradually drenched him. He paid no attention.

He felt that he was in a ridiculous position, and he felt against himself, as well as against her, an anger that made his ears burn. What could she be doing away from home as late as this? Why need she go to Barras'?

Barras! That name was like a barb in his heart. Was it true, what he had heard, what his brother Joseph had treacherously insinuated, that she had been the dictator's mistress? He didn't want to believe it. He set her too

high to put credence in that libel. Still, on all sides, women made no secret of their easy morals, giving themselves, withdrawing, changing lovers with an amiable cynicism. But could he imagine in his Josephine so much of vice and duplicity?

What! Had she had the effrontery to give to another her lips, her eyes, her sighs, all that belonged to him? Had she offered to another man that flesh still inflamed by his love? And to what man! To Barras! To that wretch, debauched, haunter of low dives, that man, almost a pimp, who owed his rise to intrigue and the lowest of trafficking?

"Barras — that swine!" he snarled. "Some day I shall have it out with him!"

A carriage came up, drawn by two bay horses trotting at full speed. It was she! He flung himself forward, opened the door, almost tore her from her seat.

"Josephine! You! At last!"

"Heavens, my dear! What has happened? Calm yourself!"

Seeing his distracted manner, his pale face, in which anxiety had already wrought havoc, she foresaw the scene he was about to make.

"I am a little late, Napoleon. Forgive me — but come. Let's not stay here in the rain."

He followed her, clenching his fists, repressing his irritation. They passed through the antechamber, the small drawing room. Suddenly he burst out: "Josephine — where were you? I have waited an hour for you!"

Very calm in manner, she took off her cape and covered her breast with a wrap of gauze.

"Will you answer me? You see that I am at the limit of my patience!"

"I have been where I had business to transact, my friend," she said, with some hauteur.

"Eh? Well, I know—traitor! You have been at Barras! With that infamous wretch! And you were there alone, weren't you? Josephine! Listen—I forbid you to see him again!"

She looked him in the eye, and said, coldly:

"And by what right, General, do you make such a demand?"

"By the right—by the right—"

All at once his anger collapsed. He became humble again, aware of his misbehavior. He was appalled by the idea that he had been able to say something that could alienate her.

"Because—because I love you," he stammered. "Because it hurts me to know that you are with any other man."

Already, anticipating her triumph, she was smiling. But she went on, condescendingly, thinking to take further advantage of her success.

"You don't understand very well, my friend, the trouble I have taken in your interest. Yes, I went to see Barras, but if I wanted to see him alone, it was for your sake, to obtain for you the command of an army—which means so much to you. The army of Italy lacks a commander. Hoche was being considered. Fortunately, I was in time. Barras has given me his promise."

He had risen, seized again by anger.

"Josephine, I have already told you, I will owe nothing to that man! Rather than hold office at his hands I would have them give it to Hoche! Ah, yes—I would—rather

a thousand times be reduced again to the most obscure rank of any officer in the army!"

His flaming eyes searched her. He gazed at her. Suddenly he blanched, and approached her, his finger pointed at her.

"Look at me, Josephine! What's happened to you? Your hair is in disorder, there is no more rouge on your cheeks. Does a woman return in such a state from the house of a man to whom she has paid a harmless visit? Ah, don't attempt to deny it any longer! And you dare show yourself to me! See—you are blushing! You don't know what to say!"

It was true. Her disorder betrayed her. A despairing glance in a mirror had just shown her her disordered hair, her rumpled dress. Her eyes filled with tears, she wrung her hands.

"Oh, my dear—you suspect me to that point! How cruel of you!"

"Have I not the right to be suspicious, this time? Everything accuses you. You dare not even deny it. Josephine—it's true, then? You, my idol, have let yourself fall so low! What unworthy conduct! Ah, my wretchedness is complete!"

"Listen to me, Napoleon," she sobbed. "I beg you—be less violent. I am not guilty as you think. I will tell you everything, you shall judge for yourself."

She tried to think, desperately, falling back upon her imagination, trying, at any cost, to gain time. He looked at her, grinding his teeth, his palms cold, his heart scarcely beating, all his life hanging on the lips that were, perhaps, about to make an avowal that would render him the most miserable of men.

"Yes. I went to see Barras, for you. I wanted to see him alone. It was a secret visit. He had promised me whatever I wanted. But immediately he made me a proposal—oh, nothing dishonorable! He wanted to divorce his wife and marry me. She is somewhere in the South. They have been separated for a long time. He was ready to make any sacrifice for me—even to give up Mme. Talien. You know, of course, how intimate they are. I tried to take it as a joke. But he grew inflamed, and I will not conceal from you that he was, it seemed to me, a little too ardent—"

"Ah! The scoundrell!" cried Bonaparte. "I will thrash him myself!"

He rushed toward the door, but she caught him by a fold of his coat and flung her arms about him.

"No, my friend, you will do nothing of the sort. I entreat you! Men must not interfere in such affairs. Besides, nothing happened. I freed myself. Look—I still show signs of the struggle. I escaped—and here I am."

She fixed him with a look from between her long lashes. Little by little the color was returning to Bonaparte's face. His features grew less distorted. It was plain that he wanted to believe her. She went on.

"If I had done wrong, do you suppose that I wouldn't have taken the time to do my hair, to powder my nose?"

That argument seemed reasonable; it disposed of his last, lingering doubts. She still went on, insistently:

"If I didn't tell you at once, it was because I didn't want to distress you. You know that I love only you, Napoleon."

He threw himself at her feet.

"Forgive me, my dear—forgive me! I was mad!"

You are the loveliest, the noblest, of women. I am only a wretch. But this man who dared — Oh, I shall get even with him. I hate him!”

“Be sensible, my dear. You must promise me. Violence will do us no good. Barras is powerful. We both need him — I, especially, who think only of your welfare.”

She drew him close to her, stroking his hair. Warmed by her breast, his head thrown back, he looked at her with wondering eyes, as one does at a loved being one recovers when one has thought her lost forever. Suddenly he rose. He held the Creole in a still closer embrace, and, in a dull, steady voice, that came from the depths of his being, he said:

“Josephine — I can’t bear any more! I must say it even though I risk losing you. Josephine — will you marry me?”

Amazed by that sudden proposal, she started from him. What was she to reply? His tragic face frightened her. To gain time she said, jestingly:

“Your wife? Why that, my dear? Aren’t we happy as we are?”

He faced her, his hair in disorder, his eyes glowing.

“Happy? Perhaps you are, but not I! No. Life can’t go on like this. I suffer too much. I am too unhappy. Josephine, I can’t live without you any longer. Your absence is a terrible disease, worse than that which, some day, will kill me. When I am far from you I can think only of seeing you again. I would like to follow you, so as not to lose a single glimpse of you — to kiss every footprint of yours. You know it.

“I, who am so little accustomed to society, force myself to appear in the salons where you go, at Mme. Tallien’s,

at Mme. Hamelin's, at Barras', in all these places I loathe, which seem to me heavenly because you are there. Ah, don't be frivolous — don't refuse! Or I shall believe that you don't love me, and that I have every reason to suspect you of being unfaithful."

He stopped, breathless. Worried, disturbed, she realized that she could not take such a demand lightly, and that this vehement lover was not to be put off with mere words. She must deal with him, quiet him at once.

"My dear," she said, "I am astonished! Marry you? It would be to make a lovely dream come true. But are you serious? You are so young. As for me, I shall soon be an old woman."

"You — oh!"

He laughed. The adoration in his eyes convinced Josephine that this argument would avail her little.

"And remember, Napoleon, that I am not alone. I have two children almost grown up. I don't want to impose that added burden on you — interfere with your career."

"Josephine — what are you saying? Your children? I love them already as if they were my own! I will not cherish them any less than those you will give me, my love. I know myself to be rich enough in tenderness to guard all of you."

"I know that I can count on your great heart, my dear," she said, feeling that she was losing ground. "But it is not a question only of us. You have a family. How would it receive me? Wouldn't my situation trouble it?"

Bonaparte's eyes gleamed. His forehead was creased.

"My family has nothing to say about it. We shall see whether it won't accept the wife I have chosen!"

She trembled at his voice, which betrayed a fierce determination.

"Still," she said, "I don't want to cause trouble between you and your relatives. Have you thought of this matter, Napoleon? Marriage is a serious thing. Is your heart really free? I have heard that you were very intimate with the sister of your brother Joseph's wife."

With a gesture he disposed of that affair.

"Desirée Clary? Oh, my love, please have done with these wretched arguments. If you really love me there is nothing, nothing, in the world, to keep us apart. Josephine — once more — answer me — will you be my wife?"

He had come close to her, his face was pressed to hers, as if to force from her lips, by virtue of his suffering, a promise, even a simple word of hope.

"Napoleon, my dear — let me have time to think. I must reflect — I must consult my family, too. Oh, if I had only to seek counsel with my heart!"

He asked no more. On his knees, he kissed her hands. Suddenly humble, pleadingly, he sighed:

"It is late, Josephine. I will go, leave you alone."

She felt that she had him in her power again. With a gentle gesture she embraced him, this ardent lover whose demands disturbed her so greatly.

"Rascal. You distressed me so, an hour ago, that you deserve to be sent away. But I haven't the heart! Stay, stay with me —"

Intoxicated, he let his head rest on the bosom upon which the night, for him, was to seem so short. He raised himself to the mouth she yielded to him.

"I love you," she whispered.

Dazzled, he looked at her face, as one looks at heaven.



Doubts

CAN A GENERAL MAKE A GOOD HUSBAND?

MME. RENAUDIN'S WARNING — JOSEPHINE IS UNDECIDED

BARRAS, MATCHMAKER — BONAPARTE SEES HIS SUIT SUCCEED

SEATED before the fire, which she was poking nervously, Rose-Josephine was thinking. Gradually darkness fell in the drawing room, and its furnishings were lost in the shadows: only white wood, adorned with gold, gleamed softly. Outside the bare trees in the garden, casting constantly deepening shadows, darkened the windows.

"Who is there to tell me what to do?" she thought. "Yet I must answer him. Shall I become his wife? The wife of Bonaparte? Where will such a marriage lead me? Why should we marry? We were well off as it was! But I do need a protector — and there's money —"

She repeated the word bitterly. She did not love money for itself, but only for what it represented in pleasure, in clothes, a leisurely life, like a bird's, all the luxury that was necessary in the life of a pretty woman.

"Can Bonaparte provide me with what I need?"

Once more she had almost reached the end of her resources. The house was expensive to keep up, and Barras took less interest in her each day. Tradesmen were beginning to grow pressing. The day before yesterday Mme. Tallien, to whom she had confided her troubles,

had visited their joint lover. Barras had refused to do anything, saying that his pockets were empty for the amount, but the young woman had opened his desk and taken all the money it contained, with his knowledge.

"My dear," she had told him, "your mistresses must not lack money! Don't they please your taste?"

She had returned to Rose-Josephine with a full purse. Ah, but she was a good friend! Josephine sighed. She still had enough for a few days, but then — what was she to do? As the door opened she looked around; then arose. Mme. Renaudin, still attractive and stylish, though she was past fifty, had come in, fresh under her lace hat.

"Good evening, Rose," she said. "How come you to be sitting in the dark?"

She kissed her niece, and taking her over by the window, looked at her.

"Rose — something is wrong! I can see it in your face!"

"Oh, you're right, aunt. I have worries —"

Curious and affectionate, Mme. Renaudin led her to a sofa.

"What's happened, darling? You know you can trust me. I have never given you anything but good advice."

"That's exactly what I need now. I am embarrassed. Bonaparte has asked me to marry him."

"The general?"

"Yes. He's in a hurry, he torments me. I can't sleep."

"You're hesitating?"

"Put yourself in my place. I don't know what to do."

"Ah, Rose, when will you be a little practical and reasonable? Here is a better match than you had any right to hope for! Every one agrees that Bonaparte has

a magnificent future. You're no longer young, my dear. I don't remind you of this to distress you, but you have two grown children. You must think of them as well as of yourself. It's time to insure the future."

"You're right, aunt. But is Bonaparte the man for me? Ah, if he were a banker, I wouldn't hesitate, I assure you! Tallien—look at her luck in finding Ouvrard! A financier worth millions! But only soldiers seem to fall in love with me. And these days you know how uncertain the lot of generals is. All powerful to-day, they amount to nothing to-morrow. I have found that out, alas! Alexandre, my first husband—Hoche—"

"And Barras—" suggested Mme. Renaudin, insinuatingly.

"And Barras," murmured Josephine, flushing. "I have had no luck with any of them. Moreover, my lawyer, Maître Ragideau, advises me to be wary. Then—there is quite a difference in our ages. I am six years older than he, I think."

Mme. Renaudin laughed.

"Don't worry about that, my dear. I think it won't be difficult to substitute your younger sister's certificate of baptism for yours—that of the one who died. I can arrange that—such matters aren't gone into very deeply."

"Thank you, aunt. I know I can count on you. But that's not all. Bonaparte has a family—I don't know how many brothers and sisters; they worry me. They are ambitious, and as savage as wolves. When they know that I have no fortune—"

"One word, darling. Does this Bonaparte love you?"

"He's mad about me!" she said, her face lighting up with pride.

"Then nothing else matters. Listen to me, Rose—don't refuse him. You would be wrong, very wrong. But I must go—no, don't disturb yourself. I have some shopping to do at the Palais-Royal. I looked in to see if you were well. I hope Eugene and Hortense are both all right, too. Do they like it at St. Germain?"

"Oh, yes. My children have brought me nothing but joy."

Mme. Renaudin rose, kissed her niece, and, on the threshold of the door, turned:

"Reflect carefully, Rose. Think! General Bonaparte. This is serious. I am sure you will have occasion to repent if you refuse him."

The door closed. Slowly the younger woman returned to her chair before the fire, took up the tongs, and lost herself in thought again.

"Napoleon—Napoleon?" she whispered, fearfully—and yet as if she were tempted, too.

The fire burned up. She closed her eyes.

A tongue of flame, leaping high, dazzled her eyes.

Barras was receiving at the Luxembourg. Under the brilliant lights of the chandeliers of crystal was a superb show of jewels, of sumptuous costumes, of the shoulders and bosoms of women. The five directors, dressed in costumes of the period of François I, were all present.

Fifty musicians tuned their instruments before beginning the waltz in which men and women were to be enlaced in the most voluptuous of all dances—Incroyables in black stocks, shod in Turkish slippers, and the lovely Merveilleuses, some dressed like nymphs, some like Oriental princesses, some like Indians, others appearing as Mi-

nerva, or Diana, or Galatea, wearing the sandals of the day, and all almost nude to the waist.

Clad in a dress of Indian muslin, wearing on her shoulders a long red cashmere shawl, a diamond tiara on her short black hair, Mme. Tallien never left the side of Ouvrard, the banker, bewitching him with her grace, her smiles, the glimpses of her gleaming flesh that her gown allowed him to obtain.

Sieyes, with his angular and sinister profile, chatted, in a low voice, with his face as pale as that of a corpse, and his scanty hair. Near them Freron, wanting to organize a game of faro, tried to recruit Mehul, the composer, Joseph Chenier and Larevellière Lepeaux, who was running his pale hands through his hair.

Talleyrand, in a costume of silk, trimmed with claret color, had cornered Mme. Hamelin, who wore only a wisp of gauzy chiffon. Like a faun, his cheeks feverish, cheek close to her cheek, he indulged in audacities that amused the pretty Creole, making her laugh uproariously, while her breasts touched the person of her tormentor.

Sitting a little apart, Mme. de Staël, in a white dress, trimmed with blue, an Indian shawl wrapped like a turban about her head, kept her lovely bare arm about Julie Récamier, dressed all in white, a pretty woman with a virginal face.

"Stay with me, dear," said Mme. de Staël. "Don't dance. Those amusements are unworthy of us. Let's talk of philosophy."

"I'll be glad to do that. At least, while I'm with you, he won't dare to pester me."

"Who, then?"

"Why, Lucien Bonaparte, the general's brother. He's

taken it into his head to make me his mistress! I meet him wherever I go. I do everything I can to discourage him—it's no use—he comes back for more! I hate his impertinence! Look—do you see him over there, spying on us?"

Leaning against a pillar, Lucien Bonaparte, with his tall, thin body, and his florid face set off by his black hair, never stopped regarding Mme. Récamier with an animal's fierce eyes, covetous of her flexible throat, her curly head, and her crimson lips.

"I detest all these Bonapartes," said Mme. de Staël.

"Hush, dear—here's Mme. de Beauharnais. You know that she is thinking of the general as a second husband? They say he's mad about her."

Rose-Josephine, in a dress of blue and silver, more modestly clad than most of the women, was passing, gracefully, and greeted them with a smile. She was looking for Barras. Throughout dinner she had been besieged by a Bonaparte thinner and yellower than ever, burning with an inner fire—but afraid to say a word on the subject of marriage.

Just now he was talking to Carnot concerning developments in Italy. The news from Italy was bad, and he was disgusted by the incapacity of the French generals. He gestured, angrily, in the grip of his dream, and Josephine had left him, already strangely jealous of the military glory the attraction of which for him was strong enough to make him forget her, if only for a moment—this man whom she was so sure she could bring to her feet with a word.

Still, this respite was to her taste, since it left her free to talk to Barras with less restraint. Where was he?

Finally she saw him in the crowd at the other end of the room. Passing through the various groups, she reached him.

"Barras," she said, "I want to talk to you."

"At your service! I will go with you."

She drew him into a recess, by a window. Outside the moon, like a great hoop, silvered the trees in the garden.

"Well, Rose, I'm listening," said Barras. "I suppose you want to tell me of your engagement to Bonaparte? My congratulations!"

She stiffened.

"Oh, Paul—how cruel you are! What have I done to you? Don't you love me any more?"

"I adore you! But I am better than you think. I am concerned first of all with your interests."

"Oh, my interests! Do they matter when one's heart is the stake?"

"Let's be serious, Rose. I know that Bonaparte is in love with you. That's plain to be seen. Become his wife. I know how you are placed, my dear. Let me tell you that your position is not one of the best. This is the best—perhaps the last—chance you will have to set your house in order. Certainly, it will be hard for me to give you up—be sure of that—"

He scrutinized her with keen eyes that paused at each wrinkle and noticed all the marks of age. Hurt, wounded, she turned away.

"You are still charming," said the dictator, gallantly. "He'll have no cause for complaint."

She smiled; the compliment was like a gift to a beggar.

"I understand you perfectly, my friend," she said.

"But put yourself in my place. To marry Bonaparte — oh, it would be an adventure — but there would be uncertainty again! And I need rest so much!" she ended, in a weary tone.

"Uncertainty!" cried Barras. "But he's a genius! We shall make him the first soldier in the republic. For love of you I shall see to his advancement. Carnot means to appoint him to the command of an army. What more do you want? He is generous. He gives liberally to his family." Insinuatingly, keeping his eye on her: "Isn't generosity desirable in a husband?"

"Perhaps — but he is jealous, too."

"Oh, of course — a Corsican! After all, it would be difficult, I think, for a man not to be jealous of you. But you're clever enough not to get yourself into trouble. At any rate, if you want my advice, don't wait too long. There are those who can make mischief for you with him. There are rumors about you. Take advantage of the blindness of a man in love. I wouldn't be surprised to see his brothers, Lucien and Joseph, against you. And, between us, they wouldn't lack for arguments."

Shamefaced, she lowered her eyes. These were sage counsels she had been hearing.

"I suppose you're right, Barras," she said. "I think I will make up my mind to accept him."

"Now you're talking sense! Later on you'll thank me for my advice."

She looked at him with eyes in which tears trembled.

"Ah, Barras! If you had only been willing —"

"But I long only for your happiness, Josephine," he said, amiably disinterested. "That will be my only consolation in losing you."

She gave him a feeble handshake.

"Good-by, Paul," she stammered, "I will always be your friend. At your first appeal, my heart will remember —"

Trembling, she mingled with the crowd. She saw Bonaparte, who had come to look for her. She put her hand to her forehead.

"Napoleon — I'm going home. I have a frightful headache."

"Let me take you. My carriage is downstairs. If you go, you know that there is nothing here to interest me."

He helped her with her mantle, led her to the carriage, and seated her carefully, propping her up with cushions. The driver whipped up the horses, which trotted off apace.

Leaning back, eyes closed, she didn't stir. Close to her, Bonaparte felt on his cheek the warmth of her breath, but he dared not speak. Suddenly she shivered; she heard an humble, remote voice, which came to her as if on the wings of a breeze.

"Josephine — forgive me for speaking to you to-night, but I can't wait any longer! Tell me your answer, whatever it may be. Don't be afraid of hurting me."

She opened her eyes, looking at him tenderly; she was full of her new resolve.

"My decision, my dear? Well, then — I will be your wife as soon as you please!"

Stifling a cry of joy, he seized her in his arms, and covered her face, her throat, her hair, her dress, with kisses. He treated this body which was promised to him, to him alone, forever, like his prey.

"Josephine! Is it possible? You are to be my wife? My wife! Do you know that you make a god of me!"

Josephine — I never want you to be called anything else! My Josephine!"

He repeated that name again and again, ecstatically; this name he had given her, and which, by some miracle, was to make a new woman of her, whose body and soul, the past henceforth forgotten, were to be more and more his and his alone!

Third Part



GENERAL BONAPARTE



Leavetaking

BONAPARTE'S DISTRESS

MUTUAL VOWS AND PROMISES OF FIDELITY

HE appeared in the door of the drawing room, out of breath from hurrying, flushed.

"Josephine! It's settled. I'm going!"

"You're going?" she said, rising.

"Yes. At once. The carriage is coming for me. I have told Louise to get my clothes and my equipment together."

"Oh, Bonaparte — is it possible? We've hardly been married two days, and you leave me already!"

"It has to be," he said, with an effort. "Carnot insists, and he's right. There's no time to lose."

Dismayed, he looked at his wife, afraid to approach her lest he be unable to tear himself away.

The day before yesterday, on the 19th. Ventose, Year IV, they had been married by the Mayor of the Second Arrondissement, at ten o'clock in the evening, at the Hotel de Mondragon. Since then two nights, two short nights had passed, during which he had possessed as a husband that body so greatly desired. A drop of water to quench the thirst of one in hell! But what a wedding present Carnot had given him — command of the Army of Italy! Barras had kept his promise. At the moment the splendor

of that appointment had kept him from realizing what it entailed. But before long he understood, with terror, all that it involved.

Command of the Army of Italy might mean that he was going to his death. At any rate, it meant his departure, and the need of living apart from his adored wife, a prospect even more desolate than death. And now came the moment in which a jealous fate made him pay so dearly for his delight in his promotion in hastening the hour of their separation.

"Can't you postpone going?" she begged. "A few days — time enough for us to grow used to the idea of parting?"

"No, no, my love. That's impossible. The safety of the republic is at stake."

She went to him, put her arms about him. A deep emotion stirred his thin body.

"You are shivering! Are you cold?"

"No — it's nothing — I'll be all right. It's because I must leave you. Oh, I'm unhappy!"

She drew him down beside her on the sofa. He let himself be led like a child, and buried his head on her warm breast.

"I'm suffering," he said. "Josephine! My Josephine! How am I to live without you? Do you know that you are as essential to me as the air I breathe? What will become of me, deprived of the kisses that give me my only strength? I thought I had known the depths of woe, but no! Isn't it the worst of misfortunes to have known you and loved you — and then to be torn from you?"

"Oh, my dearest," she sighed, "why are you so ambitious, then? Why did this post mean so much to you? Do you see the cost of glory?"

"Josephine! How can you speak so? It's only for you that I seek fame! My love, no honor seems to me too great to lay at your feet, no fortune is worthy of your beauty! I want you to be revered like a queen, I want your name to be known and loved in the humblest hovels, I want the least of your actions to be an event! My Josephine—I want you to owe everything to me—happiness, wealth, the adoration of the crowd. I want every one to envy you. Oh, when you love me I feel myself capable of conquering the whole world!"

He rose. Warmed, lighted up by an inner fire that transformed him, that transfigured him, his black hair became like a halo about his head. Josephine looked at him, amazed by this sudden change.

"It will be like a game for me," he said, "for the sooner I crush the enemy, the sooner I shall return to your arms! Oh, I'm not afraid of them! I shall have only 40,000 men, against the 50,000 of Colli and Beaulieu, who plan to march on Nice and the Var. The idiots! Beaulieu can pack his bags. I shall advance from Piedmont. I shall occupy Milan and Padua, cross the Mincio, establish myself on the Adige. We are short of victuals and money, the soldiers have no shoes, but the country is rich. The Dukes of Parma and Modena will pay. The Pope has nothing to do but hold his own and intrigue—he will pay, too! As for Venice, I shall reduce that nest of pirates.

"Oh, they'll be helpless! Old Wurmser plans to defend Mantua. What will happen to him and to his friend Alvinczi! They'll call in vain on the troops in the Tyrol and from Frioul to help them—I shall take Mantua! Let the Emperor Francis tremble! I shall make my way to his capital, Vienna, across his own mountains! My soldiers

shall camp under its walls. He'll have to sue for peace.

"Then it will be a question of organizing new states. France will bring freedom to these peoples, but they must be taught to serve her, too. I shall give them a fine constitution. We'll found a republic down there. I shall have freed Italy from the Austrians—those barbarians! Josephine, I shall free my own country! You know that my ancestors were Florentine patricians? Ah, the world shall see what the little Vendemairian general can do!"

He walked with great strides around the room, like a man in a trance; his distended, fixed eyes, saw his armies maneuvering in the future; already his eager, feverish hands seized upon the fugitive wings of victory. Josephine, with her long, slim hand, stifled a yawn. She didn't understand him; how could he waste so much precious time with vain and empty words?

"Napoleon," she whispered, holding out her arms to him. "Come—once more—"

He recoiled, afraid, tortured by desire.

"No—no—we mustn't! Then I could never leave you—I know it! Don't tempt me! Oh, my darling, how I suffer! Love me well. Above all, be true to me. How I shall tremble! You are so beautiful—so good! They will try to steal you from me."

"Napoleon—do you think me capable of that? Aren't you sure of my love? And do you think I shan't be afraid? They tell me the Italian women are beautiful."

"My love, if you could read my heart you would be ashamed of that unworthy suggestion! I shall think only of you. I will write to you every day. And you—do you know that down there your letters will mean everything to me?"

"I promise to answer all of yours, Napoleon."

"And, perhaps, I can send for you to join me — who knows? The journey wouldn't frighten you?"

"How little you know me! I shall fly to you at your first summons."

Some one knocked. Louise came in.

"General," she said, "citizen Berthier has come."

"I'm going."

He hurried into the dining room. Berthier, a small melancholy man, with curly hair, was waiting for him, paring his nails.

"General," he said, "the carriage is here."

"And Junot?"

"Yes. Everything is ready."

"Wait one moment for me. I'm coming."

He went back to the drawing room. He looked, despairingly, at this room in which he had been so happy, to fix it forever in his memory.

"Josephine!" he said. "Josephine!"

He seized her, crushed her in his arms, kissed her forehead, her throat, her mouth; pressed her to him as if to transfer to himself the passion, the very shape, of that cherished form. Moved, she returned his kisses to the best of her power. He left her only to snatch her again in his arms, went away again, returned, and looked at her, a terrible anguish in his eyes.

"It's the end! Good-by — good-by!"

Two tears ran down his cheeks. He leaped back from her.

"No! Stay there! Don't follow me! Have pity!"

He reached the door and fled, at the end of his courage, like a wounded animal.



Awakening

BRIOCHE AND LOVE LETTERS

A HUSBAND WHO KNOWS HOW TO TALK OF LOVE
HOW, BEREFT OF A HUSBAND, ONE MAY MAKE LIFE AGREEABLE

JOSEPHINE opened one eye, and turned over in bed. Fortune, who slept on the counterpane, growled, menacingly. She silenced him with a slap. Then she looked at the clock; it was ten o'clock. She felt hungry, and rang. A moment later Louise came in, with a tray which she put down on the chair beside the bed, to serve her mistress.

"Tell me, Louise," said the Creole, "do you know where I put Bonaparte's letter?"

"Here it is, madame," said the maid, picking up the letter, which had fallen on the floor.

A smile in the corners of her mouth, Josephine looked at the still unopened letter. It had been brought to her at midnight the night before, when she returned from a ball at the Tivoli, exhausted from dancing, and with a splitting headache due largely to having drunk a little too much Maraschino.

"I'll read it to-morrow — there's a time for everything," she had said.

She sat up against her pillows, opened the letter, took her cup, and, alternating a bite of *brioche* and an endear-

ment, resolutely attacked her breakfast and the general's letter together.

PORTE MAURICE, 14TH. GERMINAL.

I have received all your letters, but none made as much impression on me as the last. What do you mean, my most adorable of lovers, by writing to me in such terms? Don't you know that my position is hard enough as it is, without your adding to my regrets and disturbing my soul? What a style! What sentiments you describe! They are fire itself, they burn my poor heart. Josephine, you are incomparable—away from you there is no more gayety, away from you the world is a desert in which I am desolate and unable to appease my grief. You have taken more than my soul from me, you are my only thought. When I am worried by the way things are going, if I fear the outcome, if men disgust me, if I am ready to curse life, I put my hand over my heart. Your picture is there. I look at it, and love becomes an absolute delight—everything is cheerful, except for the time that I know I must spend away from my mistress.

To live for Josephine—that is the story of my life. Ah, my adored wife, I don't know what fate awaits me, but if it keeps me much longer away from you it will be unbearable. My courage won't serve for that. Once I was proud of my bravery, and when I thought of the harm men could do me, the lot that fate might have in reserve for me, I contemplated the worst misfortunes without a frown, without dread, but now the idea that my Josephine may be ill, or in trouble, and above all, the cruel, the deadly thought that she may love me less than she did, crushes

my soul, makes my heart stop beating, saddens me, leaves me without even the courage of rage and despair.

I will stop, my dearest. My heart is sad, my body is tired, my spirit is cast down. Men bore me. I have reason to detest them—they keep me from my love. Love me as you do your own eyes! But that's not enough. Love me like yourself, more than yourself, more than your mind, your spirit, your life, everything that you are and have! Dear friend, forgive me—I am raving.

Josephine put down her cup, let the letter fall to the carpet, and stretched, voluptuously.

“Just the same, he’s nice, and he does love me, that little Puss-in-Boots!”

She received such letters nearly every day. It was flattering, but it did grow a little boring. Bonaparte could write of nothing but his love, his jealousy; he overwhelmed her with reproaches, then begged her pardon. His letters were made up of tears, cries, pleading. And the worst of it was that she had to answer them! Thankless duty, from which she recoiled, and which she avoided as much as she could, the composition of those letters, in which the same words repeated themselves, coming, without passion, from her bird’s brain!

Yet she was not negligent. Ought she not to handle Bonaparte with care? Contemplating her new life, she saw herself surrounded by a pleasant security. She was now safe and comfortable. She had a devoted, an infatuated husband, prepared to turn the world upside down to gratify her whims, a generous husband who was entitled to her consideration—and whose greatest virtue, too, just now, was that he was making war far away!

Decidedly, her future was looking up. And the present was not without its delights. A sense of well being permeated her at the thought. Soon she would get up, spend three hours dressing, lunch on a chicken wing and a cream cake, dress for the street, and go, in her carriage, to get Mme. Hamelin and go to the Palais-Royal and thence, perhaps, to the Rue d'Anjou, to Martin's, the Piedmontaise.

That evening she would dine with Juliette Récamier. To-morrow she was to try on three dresses and attend a soirée at the Théâtre-Français. The day after, she was lunching with Mme. Tallien, calling on the Chateaufrenauds, on Mme. de Staël, on the Cambacères. She would show herself in all these houses where, as soon as she appeared, owing to Bonaparte's fresh fame, a little court gathered about her.

Honored, provided with all she needed, wholly free to do as she pleased, her spirit at rest, what more could she want? But, oh, if only she need not answer Bonaparte's letters! It was a slight task, which she now regularly disposed of in three lines. Life was good; she must not spoil it.

The air in the room was warm. A soft April sun, coming through the window, gilded the carpet. Suddenly gay, Josephine lifted Fortune by the scruff of his neck.

"Darling of a dog!" she cried. "That's how marriage becomes supportable! Come here, you ugly little brute—let me kiss you!"



One Night

IN CAMP — EVOCATION — HOMESICKNESS
DISCOURAGEMENT

WITH a weary gesture Bonaparte pushed aside the maps that, compass in hand, he had been studying for hours. The night was growing late, a soft Italian night, full of moonbeams and blue shadows. On the bureau the lamp, its oil running low, was guttering. He called, and an orderly brought a new lamp. The general looked longingly at the cot that was set up beside him, closed his eyes for a moment, and listened.

Outside, the camp stretched as far as he could see. Camp fires gleamed upon the dark mass of the baggage wagons. There was calm, but not silence. He heard the movement of tethered horses, the challenges of sentries, which, farther and farther away, broke the stillness. The deep note of the breathing of his sleeping army broke over him like a living wave.

He passed his hand across his forehead to rid himself of the warlike thoughts which, like veils, hid his idol from him.

"Josephine — Josephine!" he whispered.

He took a sheet of paper, and, with an impatient and feverish hand, wrote:

HEADQUARTERS, GARRU, 5TH, FLOREAL, IV.

I have received your letters of the 16th. and the 21st. Certainly you have let many days pass without writing to me. What are you doing? Yes, my dear, my dear, I'm not jealous, but I am, sometimes, uneasy. Come soon; I warn you, if you delay, you will find me ill. Weariness and your absence at the same time—it's too much!

Your letters are the happiness of my days, and my happy days are rare. Junot is taking 22 captured standards to Paris. You must come back with him. Listen. If that never comes about, if he doesn't come, if, irremediable grief, unconsolable sadness, he comes without you, alone! My darling, he will see you, he will breathe the air of your shrine. Perhaps you will even bestow upon him the rare and inestimable privilege of kissing your cheek! As for me, I shall be here all alone, far away—but you will come back with him, won't you? You will come here, to be beside me, in my arms, your heart beating against mine, your lips pressed to mine? Take wings—come! But come gently, the road is long, and bad, and tiring. If you were upset, if anything happened to you, if weariness—Come carefully, my darling, but be often with me in your thoughts.

I have a letter from Hortense. She is sweet, I will write to her. I am very fond of her, and I shall soon send her the perfumes she wants.

Read carefully Carthon's song, and sleep, far from your lover, thinking of him, at ease and without remorse.

A kiss on your heart—

B.

He broke off, laid down his pen, and drew from an inside pocket of his uniform her portrait, which he kissed before he looked at it with greedy eyes, as if the passion of his lips had been able, by some miracle of love, to animate that cold image of her. He looked at the miniature a long time, unable to bring himself to put it back over his heart, to deprive himself of the sight of his beloved wife.

Time passed without his realizing it. This was no longer a tent in which he stood; it was no longer an army cot that was beside him. He was in the perfumed bedroom of the house in the Rue de Chantereine, its bed crumpled, a dress thrown over a chair, its air warmed by the body he had just released. It was not the sound of the awakening army that he heard, but the laughter of Hortense and Eugene, the barks of Fortune, the musical voice with the airs caressing his ears. It was she, his wife, whom he saw, with her deep, tender eyes, her delicate nose, her flexible neck, her breasts, the long thighs so soft to kiss. . . .

A trumpet call made him start. Dawn had come. He rose and went to the threshold of his tent. He must give orders, receive his generals, confer with the adjutants. Torn harshly from his dream of love, he was outdone.

"Josephine!" he whispered, as if the name were a prayer, able to restore his energies.

He raised his head. Stars twinkled in the sky. He looked at them enviously. They, at least, could watch her, as she slept in her lace-covered bed.



Motherhood

AN UNEXPECTED VISIT — SETTING THE STAGE

MURAT BRINGS ANNOYING NEWS — HOW AVOID A TRIP TO ITALY?

AN INSPIRATION — THE AIDE-DE-CAMP IS RATHER FIERCE

A FINE FIGURE OF A MAN

“**M**ADAME,” said Louise, “it is Murat, the general’s aide-de-camp. He has arrived from Italy, with a letter for you.”

“Again!” sighed Josephine. “Well, go and see him. But wait — put the harp in the middle of the room, bring up my tapestry screen. There — now you can go.”

She looked about, well pleased. Everything was in order. By an extraordinary piece of luck, she was all alone that day, with nothing to do, having expected in vain, that undependable Fanny de Beauharnais, with whom she had been supposed to drive to Ranelagh.

She seated herself at the tapestry, and did some work. The door opened. A great fellow came in, in a uniform covered with much gold lace and with many points, wearing Brandenburg boots. He had wide shoulders, black, curly hair, a high color, and sparkling eyes.

“Ah, Murat!” she said, rising. “I’m very glad to see you. You bring me news of the general? Look — I was bored — I was playing the harp a little. I sew while I wait, like Penelope.”

Murat bowed, awkwardly.

"Citoyenne, you will excuse me. I have just arrived from Italy, but the general made a point of it that my first call should be upon you. He charged me to give you this letter."

He took a sealed letter from his dolman. Josephine, feigning eagerness, seized it, and seated herself on the sofa.

"Thanks, Murat. I'm obliged to you for your promptness. Bonaparte's letters are my one excuse for living now. Sit there, by me. You will excuse me—?"

She broke the seal, took the letter, and read.

CHERUBLE, 10TH, FLOREAL.

Murat, who will give you this letter, will tell you what I have accomplished and what I want. I wrote to you by way of Junot to leave with him to join me; I now beg you to leave with Murat and go by way of Turin. So I may see you within a fortnight. I am happy in your happiness, joyful when you are gay, I take pleasure in your delight. Never has a wife been loved with so much devotion, fire and tenderness.

How can you expect me not to be sad, my life! No letter from you! It's four days since I had one—and if you loved me, you would write to me twice a day. But I must deal with insignificant visitors from ten in the morning until an hour after midnight. In a country where they have good manners, every one is at home after ten o'clock at night, but in such a country one writes to one's husband, one thinks of him, one lives for him. Adieu, Josephine—you seem to me a wretch I can't understand!

I love you more each day. Absence cures the lighter loves, but intensifies grand passions. I kiss your lips, your heart. There's no one else, is there? I kiss your breast, too. How lucky Murat is! Ah, if you can't come!

Josephine laughed.

"Ah, but he's amusing, this Bonaparte!" she said. "He's a boy, Murat — a sweet boy!"

The aide-de-camp, his nostrils flattered, sensed the perfume of the room. Slightly abashed, he looked at its flowery luxury, and at this pretty woman, who was so very cordial to him. His esteem for his commander was suddenly increased.

Josephine continued to read her letter, her mobile countenance punctuating each phrase with a smile, with a childish pout, or with a sudden look of pity. And yet, there was nothing new in this letter. Ah — but yes — one phrase, near the end, caught her attention.

I send you, by Murat, two hundred louis, of which you will avail yourself if you need money.

Two hundred louis! Good news! She put the letter back in its envelope, slipped it into her corsage, and, absent-mindedly, asked:

"By the way, Murat, Bonaparte says you bring me something —?"

"Yes, two hundred louis. I will bring them this evening. The general thought that would be enough for your trip."

She looked at him, disturbed.

"He's serious about that plan?"

"Very much so! He's set upon my bringing you back. Citoyenne, you must admit that I can do no less than insist. My return will be much pleasanter than my coming," he added, suddenly emboldened.

Josephine felt faint. Leave Paris, go to Italy? Seek adventures? No! No!

"Go to him? Murat, it's out of the question! I have duties here. Bonaparte doesn't understand what it means to be a woman. We're not to be ordered about like armies! You confuse the two."

"Citoyenne, if you knew with what impatience Bonaparte awaits you! He's only half alive. He terrifies us. He's an extraordinary man. Never before has a general won so many victories, and such astonishing ones, in so short a time. Montenotte, Millesimo, Mondovi — all in eighteen days! Beaulieu's army annihilated — Piedmont conquered!"

"Oh, he's a hero, Murat — I know that! Yet he does not understand frail women."

"He talks only of you, Citoyenne. And — I understand better, now, why."

She smiled, with a feeling that it might not be impossible for her to get Murat on her side. Distracted, she sought for some excuse for getting out of this trip. No matter what, no matter how unlikely, how clumsy, so long as it gave her a little more time. Ah — she had it!

"You embarrass me terribly, my friend," she said. "Reflect upon the importance to Bonaparte of my presence in Paris. Here I watch over his interests. For me to leave would be to leave those who envy his success a free field for their plots against him. And then, Murat, there's another thing. I'm not very well. Don't tell any one — but — I — I think there is to be a child."

Murat's eyes flashed.

"Oh—but that will make the general the happiest of men!"

"Nor shall I be less happy than he, my friend."

Distraught, she fell back on the cushions, and her dress, caught up, revealed a flash of her pink leg above the knee. Murat did not fail to see it.

"In the circumstances," he said, "it might be imprudent for you to set out upon so long a journey. You would do well to consult the general on that point."

She breathed more freely; she had gained her point. She understood perfectly that this confidence would attach Murat to her, and create between them a sort of conspiracy which it would be easy for her to accentuate.

"Come to see me soon, Murat," she said, giving him her hand. "Have lunch here to-morrow—I will present you to Mme. Tallien—I shall have several friends. She can be useful to you. And we shall meet, too, at the festivals the Directory expect to arrange in celebration of the victories. It is only right that you should share this glory. Write to Bonaparte—tell him how you found me. For my part, I shall thank him for sending me such a messenger."

She took him to the door, stifling him with her perfume, bewitching him with her smiles. At the door he turned toward her vulpine eyes, already eager, and, made awkward by his great size, took his leave, ungracefully.

She watched him going off, from the window. Bonaparte's urgent shadow passed before her eyes; she pouted. Below, Murat turned the corner.

"A handsome man—and according to the taste of the day!" she said, with a little laugh.



Intermission

A HANDSOME COUPLE OF ILLICIT LOVERS — MURAT'S ANXIETY
HOW BONAPARTE TAKES THE NEWS OF HER PREGNANCY
MURAT REASSURED AND HAPPY

“**A**_H, my dear — did you sleep well?”

“Splendidly, Murat, but, just the same, I have a terrible headache. That’s why you find me still in bed at eleven o’clock in the morning. You’ve come at the right moment to drive it away.”

She gave the general a meaning look, and gave him her hand. But Murat, seeing a pink toe stealing out from under the bedclothes, stooped, suddenly, seized the little foot, covered it with kisses, even bit it with his sharp teeth.

Shaking with laughter, Josephine stretched herself out under the covers.

“Murat! You are a monster — an adorable monster! How dare you? Stop it! You’re killing me — ”

The officer rose, and seated himself, in a familiar fashion, on the bed beside her. They had become lovers the day before yesterday; Murat had wooed her brusquely, in the fashion of an hussar.

At the fête the Directory had given at the Luxembourg, to celebrate Bonaparte’s victories, and to welcome the twenty-two captured standards Junot had brought, Josephine had ap-

peared in the place of honor, crowned with golden laurels, acclaimed by the crowd, hailed by all the dignitaries.

Murat, exalted, dazzling in his new general's uniform, had stayed beside her during the ceremonies. He marched beside her, strutting, pluming himself like a rooster. Flattered by the attention his general's wife paid him, his senses inflamed by her flirtatious ways, he had been only waiting, all his shyness forgotten, to take her last defenses by storm.

Nor had he had long to wait. He saw Josephine almost every day, in various drawing rooms, at the theater, when she went walking, until that night when, in the company of a whole crowd of wild revelers, Mme. Tallien, Ouvrard, Arnault, Mme. Hamelin and her new lover, Montrond, Mme. de Chateaurenaud and several others, they had gone for a round of the dance halls after the theater, winding up, at three o'clock in the morning, at Frascati's. After dancing again there, they had all drunk champagne.

Seated beside the Creole, Murat, impassioned, upset his chair and spilled champagne over her. She had carried everything well until it came to the liqueurs, but the Kirsch had been too much for her. Suddenly, she felt herself going. After that she remembered only the vigorous embrace of two arms which lifted her, carried her into a nebulous world in which her transfigured body swooned under the spell of strange practices. . . .

In the morning she had found Murat in her bed beside her. What was she to do? She laughed, amused by the adventure, and kept him there. Since then she had had no regrets. . . .

Bonaparte had gone away two months ago, in search

of fame! So much the worse for him! She did not possess inexhaustible reserves for chastity.

Murat, with expert lips, kissed the white throat which throbbed under his caress.

"Tell me, dear Josephine," he said, anxiously, a little shamefaced, "how did the general take the news of your pregnancy? He wasn't too much annoyed by that new delay in his reunion with you?"

"He? You don't know him very well! Why, he is beside himself — he is mad with delight! Don't you believe me? Find the letter he wrote me about it — it's on the mantelpiece. You'll see that I may rest easily."

"Ah, you are flagrant, Josephine!"

"We must be, with you men!" she said, laughing at him with her eyes. "If we were not — Heavens, where should we be with you and your tricks? Come, Murat — read his letter. You'll sleep the better for knowing what he says."

Regretfully, Murat rose, took the letter, and came back to his place beside Josephine.

HEADQUARTERS AT LODI, 24 FLOREAL, IV.

So it's true that you are pregnant! Murat has written to tell me, but he says it has made you ill, and that he thinks it would be rash for you to undertake so long a journey. So, again, I am to be deprived of the happiness of holding you in my arms! For months, still, I must be far from all I love! Is it possible that I am not to have the joy of seeing you in that state? It must make you interesting! You write that you are greatly changed. Your letter is short, gloomy, and written in a shaky hand. What

is the matter with you, darling? What worries you? Ah, don't stay in the country; be in the city, seek diversion, believe that my heart knows no worse grief than thinking of you as ill and bored. I thought I would be jealous, but I swear I am not! Rather than see you depressed, I believe I would myself provide you with a lover. . . .

Her arm about Murat's neck, Josephine read over his shoulder. She laughed, lightly.

"Oh — oh, dear, how amusing it is!"

Repelled, Murat put the letter away. Josephine snatched it.

"My dear, don't make such a face! A lover! We've saved him the trouble — he ought to be satisfied!"

And, drawing the handsome officer close to her breast, offering him her lips, she whispered:

"He foresaw this — do you remember? Isn't my little Murat happy?"

Crumpling the letter in her hand, she tossed it carelessly away. Fortune, sitting nearby, watching them, leaped on the ball of paper as it fell, tossed it up, caught it, and, head lifted, made three rounds of the room, proudly, holding it in his tiny mouth.



Hyppolite Charles

AN INTERESTING FIGURE — A LETTER FROM MME. TALLIEN
THE PROSPECT OF A PLEASANT EVENING
AN UNREAD LETTER FROM BONAPARTE

TALL, slim, radiant with youth in his colonel's uniform, Junot entered the drawing room of the house in the Rue de Chantereine. Behind him walked a young, slight lieutenant of hussars.

"Citoyenne," said Junot, bowing to Josephine, "may I present my friend, Hyppolite Charles? He has just arrived from Milan, on a mission for the general. His companions nickname him 'L'Eliviette.' Receive him — you won't regret it. His very presence is enough to dispel the most persistent griefs."

Josephine held out her hand to him.

"You are welcome, lieutenant. My house is open to any friend of Junot's."

Charles bowed low and kissed the hand she gave him.

"Madame, I feel that my real mission is about to begin, to show myself worthy of the reception you are so good as to accord to me."

The Creole eyed this new visitor. He was short, dark, with lively eyes, a bold expression; tight breeches and a dolman set off his figure well. He had a catlike agility,

from hands to feet—which were very small. All in all, she liked his looks. She let her hand rest on his shoulder.

“Come, M. Charles, let me make you known to some of my good friends.”

The room was full of her intimates: Arnault, the poet, Mehul, Mme. de Chateaurenaud, Murat, Fanny de Beauharnais, thin, her face wrinkled, like an old woman. Seated beside Mme. Récamier, Freron tormented her.

“Citoyenne, by what miracle can you remain insensible to the worship of so many suitors?”

The young woman turned her pure face toward the faun-like countenance leaning toward hers.

“Freron, I have no interest in love. It’s a gross and degrading sentiment. Friendship alone interests me—remember that.”

“Ah, Juliette,” interrupted Josephine, who had approached them, “don’t disdain love. You don’t know what you miss.”

“Perhaps that’s because the pretty lady still has everything to lose!” Charles whispered in the Creole’s ear, alluding mischievously to that virginity which Mme. Récamier was said to have preserved, even though she was married.

Josephine turned, and gave him a look in which amusement and reproof were mingled. He lowered his eyes, like a boy caught in mischief, and made a face that wrinkled his nose absurdly. The Creole smiled, appraising him. Decidedly, he was not a bad recruit!

Just then Louise Compoin, making her way among the guests, approached, tray in hand.

“Madame, here are some letters that have just come. Some of them are urgent.”

Josephine took the post. There were letters from tradesmen. Ah—a note from Mme. Tallien! She seized the perfumed paper.

"Madame," said Louise, "there is a letter from the general, too."

"From Bonaparte—oh, of course!"

She glanced at the letter with a bored pout, and tossed it to the maid.

"Read it—you have the time! We'll talk of it tomorrow. Let's think first of important matters."

Louise caught the letter and hid it in her corsage.

"Let me see," said Josephine. "What does this darling Theresa want of me?"

As she read her face was flushed with pleasure and surprise. The guests, anticipating the announcement of something startling, made a circle around her.

"Louise!" cried Josephine. "Listen! Theresa tells me there is to be a great party at Thelusson this evening! She is to represent one of the three Graces, Mme. Hamelin the second, and she wants to know if I won't take the part of the third! But it's outrageous only to let me know, like this, at the last moment! Have I anything to wear?"

"Mme. Tallien will wear a pink tunic, open at the side—try to find me a dress that won't clash with hers, and put my cameos on the shoulders. Run and warn the hairdresser—have her here in an hour. Don't forget to go to the Palais-Royal and buy me a flask of jasmine. Hurry! Ah, my friends, what a gay evening we shall have! You'll go with me, won't you? We will dance. Garat has promised to sing his latest songs. Afterward, we'll all come back here, and you shall taste a punch of my making, the Negro punch of the West Indies."

Excited by her ardor, every one applauded. Josephine turned to Junot.

"I want you, especially, my friend, and you, M. Charles. You shall waltz with me."

"And he'll play the clown for you, too!" said Junot.

In the middle of the room Charles, rolling ecstatic eyes, executed a dance step, and threw kisses to the ceiling.

Louise had arranged the furniture, clearing the floor, and had aired the rooms. She had made everything ready for the punch, too. She had only to wait the return of her mistress and her guests. She sat down; there was a rustling of paper at her breast. The general's letter! She took it from her breast, still warm, and opened it, going to a lamp that she might read.

My life is a constant nightmare; a dire presentiment oppresses me. I am only half alive; I have lost more than life, more than happiness, more than rest. You are ill, I have worried you, you love me, you are pregnant, and I may not see you! It confounds me to know that I have offended you in so many ways that I don't know how to make atonement! I accuse you of staying in Paris. You were ill. Forgive me, my dearest, the love you inspire in me has robbed me of my sanity; I shall never regain it. That disease is incurable.

I am helpless now without you, I scarcely know how I lived before I knew you. Ah, Josephine, if you knew the state of my heart, would you have waited from the 6th to the 29th without setting out? Would you have listened to treacherous friends who are trying, perhaps, to keep you from me? I suspect every one.

All my thoughts are centered on your alcove, your bed, your heart. Your illness is the preoccupation of my days and nights. I have no appetite, I cannot sleep, I have no interest in my friends, in fame, in the fatherland—it's you, you, the rest of the world has no more existence for me than if it had been blotted out!

In your letter, my darling, be sure to tell me that you are convinced that I love you more than you can guess, that you are persuaded that every moment of my life is dedicated to you, that no hour passes in which I do not think of you, that the thought of another woman never comes to me. They are all without grace in my eyes, without beauty or wit; you, you alone, as I see you, can satisfy me and absorb every faculty of my being. You have possessed me utterly; my heart has no secrets from you, I have no thoughts you do not dominate; my strength, my arms, my spirit, are all yours. My soul is imprisoned in your body, the day when you change toward me, or when you cease to live, will be the day of my death. Tell me you know all this! If you do not believe me, if your soul is not convinced, you mortify me—you show me that you don't love me.

A magnetic current flows between lovers. You know that I could never see you with a lover, much less offer you one. To see him and to tear out his heart would be the act of the same moment for me—I might even lift a hand to your sacred self. But I am sure and proud of your love. Misfortunes are the tests which shall show us the strength of the love we share. An adorable child, like its mother, is about to be born, and can pass years in your arms, while I, the hapless one, must content myself with a day! A thousand kisses for your lips, your eyes, your

tongue, your. . . . Adorable woman, what is your power over me? I am sick of your sickness, I suffer already from a fever.

Do you remember that dream in which I took off your shoes, your silks, and took you wholly to my heart?

Louise let the letter fall. For a moment she remained still, her eyes far away, her hands crossed on her knees. Down there, a white face, topped by a black bang, eyes heavy with anguish, a bitter mouth, appeared in the shadows. The maid trembled; two tears stole down her cheeks.



Impatience and Anxieties

BONAPARTE'S JOY — WILL SHE COME? — A SINISTER FOREBODING
DECEIVED? — WHAT AN AMOROUS GENERAL CAN DO
IN WHICH THE SATISFACTION OF HIS DESIRES BECOMES A
MATTER OF NATIONAL CONCERN

HE had left his tent, stunned by the news they had brought him. Josephine was pregnant! He was to have a child, the child of their love! He couldn't refrain from publishing his delight.

"Berthier! My wife is pregnant! How happy I am! Kiss me, and you, too, Marmont, and you, Bourrienne."

He wanted the whole world to know the news. But his rapture kept him from seeing, at first, the implications of this occurrence. Wouldn't it be criminal to impose upon Josephine, in her condition, the fatigue of so long a journey? He gave it up, he sacrificed himself. The body he had made fertile was sacred to him. Yet she was so necessary to him! In a few days his anxiety, his desire, possessed him anew; he was mad to see her, hold her in his arms. She must come, by short stages, taking the utmost care, but come! He, charged with responsibility for a whole army, planned this journey to the last detail, that he might be the more certain of her safety, her comfort. He was frantic with a desire to see "how she carried a child."

He overwhelmed her with advice, occupied himself with the most intimate and trivial details, but paid no less attention to the front. He was still concerned with warfare, with the almost daily battles, the crossing of rivers, negotiations with Naples and the Pope. He had beaten the Austrians at Lodi, entered Milan, suppressed an insurrection at Padua and a revolt at Binasco. At night, while his soldiers slept, he planned her itinerary, worked out arrangements for carriages, for servants, for relays.

Constantly, in the towns he entered, they made holiday in his honor, and pretty women offered themselves to him. He didn't see them; he thought only of Josephine. Each letter from her, now, brought a new disappointment. She hadn't started yet! She wrote to him so seldom, so briefly, so carelessly. He tried to attribute her indifference to her illness. But, more and more, he realized that his wife's heart was fickle, that he must lose it each day, and each day recapture it. That irritated him, the conqueror of nations; he couldn't admit to himself that it was easier for him to destroy armies and force whole peoples to submit to him than to conquer the heart of the woman he adored.

One morning he was at Tortoni on a tour of inspection with Marmont. A hundred times a day he took the little ivory miniature she had given him as a present, the evening she had become his mistress, from his pocket, to look at it. He turned away from Marmont to kiss it. He stumbled, it fell; the glass was broken.

Bonaparte looked at the broken pieces in consternation. What a terrible omen! Livid, he cried, raucously:

"Marmont! Look! My wife is very ill — or else she is unfaithful!"

Trying to laugh this off, the aide-de-camp succeeded only in being banal.

"You're joking, general. To break plain glass brings good luck, not bad!"

Bonaparte clenched his fists, shut his eyes.

"Ah — if she has a lover!"

He stumbled; Marmont had to support him.

He was beset by presentiments. Jealousy made inroads in his heart. It oppressed him, possessed him, once allowed to appear, ruled him. His imagination was inflamed. What was she doing in Paris, if she were not betraying him? He overwhelmed her with the sternest reproaches. Didn't she realize that he might be killed any day? But, remembering that she was, no doubt, ill, he was ashamed of his own violence. Murat, returning, tried to convince him that she was not seriously ill, but he persisted in believing that she was mortally sick. So he begged her to forgive him, urged her to stay in Paris and enjoy herself there. He set himself down in the pages of his letters, in broken and incoherent phrases, passing from jests to cries of despair.

But it was too much! He wrote to Paris, to his brother Joseph, begging him to visit Josephine. Joseph was first of all to reassure him as to her health, and then tell him that he had persuaded her to start.

He could neither eat nor sleep; he longed for death to free him from his torments. It took all his strength to keep him from leaving his army and rushing to Paris. For a kiss from Josephine he was ready to give up all his fame; at a sign from her he would have compromised his whole career for a single embrace.

He was beside himself; knew it, and proclaimed it.

His staff was alarmed. The Directory, warned of the state of affairs, went into session. The situation was serious. Was a woman, because of her obstinacy and her frivolity, to imperil victory? Josephine must be sent to Bonaparte. Carnot, opposed to this at first, decided that it was imperative. The power of this woman dominated them all, and the safety of the republic had come to depend on a few nights of love-making.



Final Hesitations

AN ANNOYING INTERVENTION BY JOSEPH BONAPARTE
MUST JOSEPHINE LEAVE PARIS?

CHARLES IS CALLED UPON TO FURNISH AN EXCUSE
IN WHICH THE CREOLE IS CONVINCED THAT THERE IS AN ART
OF MAKING LOVE

JOSEPHINE sighed. Through the open window the scent of the garden, with roses newly in bloom, rose to her. The shade of the trees cooled her cheek and her hands. Her heart torn within her, she looked at the familiar furniture, the agreeable decorations, as one sees beloved friends from whom fate forces one to be exiled.

Joseph Bonaparte had visited her the day before, and had told her of Napoleon's orders that he was to take her to Italy with him, at any cost. He seemed delighted with his errand. How that man hated her! The scene had been dramatic. They were old foes; but, in this meeting, she had not come off victorious.

Joseph had been well armed against her. He appeared to have no illusions as to her behavior. Indignantly she had denied everything. She had pleaded, sobbed, made free use of her tears, her final weapon. But he had been unimpressed. At his threat to tell Bonaparte all he knew she had been obliged to yield, to promise to start. It had been all she could do to obtain a delay of a few days.

Now she must leave Paris. How exacting Bonaparte was! She loved him, she knew how much she owed him, but he really did not understand women. It was absurd! Hadn't they both passed the age of playing with toys? He, winning victories, she consolidating his affairs in Paris — so was their future to be assured. With her gone the friends of Hoche and Moreau would become masters of the situation.

She did so enjoy her life in Paris, freed at last of monetary cares, free to do as she pleased, surrounded by a pleasant and admiring court that paid her in adulation for the triumphs of a husband who could not bore her!

The door opened quietly. A small man slipped into the room, approached her, and stooping quickly, kissed her neck. Josephine started.

"Charles! It's you! You frightened me!"

She pointed a threatening finger at him. He jumped back and laughed at the trick he had played on her. He had the entrée to the house, now, at all hours. Bold, insinuating, he had quickly succeeded in making his way there. Josephine found him indispensable. He carried her fan and her purse when she made calls; he ran important errands for her. Becoming, in her house, a sort of master of ceremonies he improvised games, mystifications, and, a rascal full of impertinence and artifices, imitated every one with so droll a manner that no one thought of taking offense.

With Josephine his boldness and familiarity increased each day. He stole kisses from her with the skill of a thieving sparrow. But she liked him the better for that, and he slipped insensibly from the rôle of factotum to that of confidant. Moreover, she wasn't sorry to play him

against Murat, whose ardent and compromising love-making began to bore her.

"Charles!" she said. "Be quiet! I'm in no mood for horseplay."

"What's wrong, dear friend? You really are depressed."

"Ah, Hyppolite — it's terrible! I can't believe it yet. In a few days I shall be gone from Paris."

"You? And who says you must go?"

"My brother-in-law. He came yesterday — he threatened me. He's odious, Charles. He concerns himself now on Bonaparte's account — my husband is sick, it seems — dying for lack of me!"

"How can a husband be so uxorious as that! It passes understanding. Why, he's not a husband — he's a tyrant, a hangman! He deserves all he gets for causing so charming a creature to suffer."

Josephine, touched, nodded in agreement.

"I think so myself. But can't you, Charles, with all your wits, find a way out of this predicament for me?"

"Say that you are ill in bed — that three doctors have given you up —"

"Is that the best you can do? I thought you were more resourceful, my friend!"

Charles rolled his eyes.

"But — oh, well, then — it's perfectly simple. Tell him you are pregnant."

"An excellent idea, truly!"

"Ah — isn't it?"

"But one I can't use again! I have already used it. No one who knows me believes any longer that I am pregnant."

Charles bowed to her.

"Don't worry about that, dear lady! I am at your service to change that fancy into a fact!"

"You scamp! Will you be still?"

She slapped him with her fan, but he went on, much excited.

"Use me! Abuse me! Trust to my devotion! I will spare no pains to do you this service! All the pleasure will be yours!"

He saw her languishing, ready to surrender. His arms outstretched, he pushed her down on the sofa. She was laughing too hard to defend herself. Suddenly he seized her, laid her down on the cushions.

"Charles—look here! My little Charles, you're not in earnest—"

But Charles, just then, was very far from joking; he was most certainly in earnest. . . .

She sat up, completely relaxed. It had been short, but delicious. She looked in her mirror; here was something astonishing. Her hair was in order, her dress was scarcely rumpled. This Charles was a darling; he made love with an amiable and expert vivacity. She was conscious of a grateful emotion. Here was encouragement, reassurance for the future!

"Charles, my friend," she said, "you're a terrible fellow, a sweet devil. But you haven't got me out of my fix."

"I have an idea, my beauty," he said. "Why not speak to Barras? He can take it up with the Directory."

"You think of everything! That's the solution, I really believe! I am to see Barras this very evening. But—to imagine something impossible—suppose I have to go? What would you do?"

"Why, I'd follow you, Rose! I'd go to the end of the world for you!"

She kissed the lips that had uttered such pleasant words.

"Charles! You are the most adorable of clowns!"

She was relieved. This voyage to Italy assumed, all at once, a less somber aspect in her eyes.



The Die Is Cast

CONVERSATION WITH BARRAS — HE WARNS HER TO BE PRUDENT

CHARLES WILL GO ALONG

A MAID WHO WORKS BY NIGHT AS WELL AS BY DAY

THE START

“**M**y dear Josephine,” said Barras, “you come at the right moment. If you hadn’t appeared I would have asked you to visit me. I want to talk to you about Bonaparte.”

“My dear Paul—it’s about him that I must see you.”

“Then we’re agreed. Bonaparte isn’t reasonable. When he’s away from you he despairs—he becomes impossible. Nothing could be more unfortunate in a general in command of an army. He wants you.”

“I know it only too well!”

“And, after all, it’s understandable,” the gallant director continued. “Who, being married to you, wouldn’t be distracted when he was kept away from you? Now, we, or the Directory, have held him off a long time. But to deprive him any longer of his wife would be against the national interest, I believe. Josephine, you must go to him.”

“What! You, too, my friend? Are you against me, like the rest?”

“What do you mean—I, too! Others, perhaps, con-

spire against you, but, darling, I think only of your welfare. Believe me — you must go to him. So you will serve yourself as well as the republic.”

“But how can you suggest it, Barras! Would you have me undertake such a journey? I’m still ill — I have frightful headaches — dizzy spells — ”

“The altitude will cure you. The distractions of the trip will be good for you.”

“Oh, this is outrageous! Staying in inns, rushing along with relays of horses! Staying every night in some new lodging — each more uncomfortable than the last! No dressmakers — no hairdressers. It will be the death of me!”

“Calm yourself, Josephine — don’t be afraid. And remember the welcome that awaits you. You’ll have a comfortable carriage, your servants will follow you. As for clothes — good Heavens, can’t you have them sent from Paris? Bonaparte will refuse you nothing. Besides, they will give you all sorts of parties in Italy. I’m sure that you will enjoy it there.”

“Do you think so? You make it sound more attractive, Paul. Still, I’ll confess — I hate the thought of leaving Paris.”

“Yes, but you’d be most unwise to think of staying here. Suppose Bonaparte finds out why you are so anxious to stay? I’m sure that Joseph won’t keep quiet much longer. Beware of him.”

“Thank you! I know all about his feeling toward me!”

“Then you’ll go, Josephine? I’m glad to see that you’re coming to your senses. I’ll have your passports made out. Joseph Bonaparte, Junot and Louise Compont will be in the party — ”

“Barras — listen. Can’t Lieutenant Hyppolite Charles

be one of my escort? He has to rejoin the army in Italy."

The Director gave her an amused and admiring glance.

"Charles? Of course! A splendid idea! Josephine, you are resourceful — you think of everything. Bonaparte chose well when he found you. Bon voyage, my dear! When you come back I think you'll thank me for having urged you to go."

He saw her to the door, with smiles and bows.

"One word more, my dear!" he said. "Be careful. Watch Junot. He's too devoted to Bonaparte to be blind very long."

Her carriage took her home quickly.

"Louise!" she cried. "Louise — it's settled. We're going. You must pack, we must see to my clothes. Go at once to Lieutenant Charles'. Tell him I want to talk to him — he must come at once. By the way, Louise — there's something you can do for me. You know Junot? How do you like him?"

"He's a handsome man, Madame," said the maid, looking at her shrewdly.

"But he may talk too much to Bonaparte. Do you understand? Well, then — I count on you to keep him from poking his nose into my business. You know how?"

"Madame may be sure of my devotion," said the pretty maid, blushing happily. "I'll see to it!"

"You're my good angel, Louise! You shall be well rewarded. Come — let me kiss you."

On the 8th. Messidor, Year IV, the party started for the South. Josephine, quite resigned, said she was delighted to be off.

Hyppolite Charles certainly showed himself worthy of her confidence in him. He took care of the horses, saw to the carriages, made sure that the lodgings were always comfortable, humored the slightest whim of his mistress. At night, when every one was asleep, he stole into her room and reaped his reward.

Every morning Junot's tired eyes bore witness to the nature and the ardor of the attention paid to him by Louise; he never left her until he had to, and at meals he ate like a giant. They were all gay; no one complained. The nights were long, the days short. This journey had become a pleasure trip.

Meanwhile, beyond the mountains, Bonaparte, advised by Barras that his wife was on the way, hurried from Florence to Bologna, from Bologna to Roverbella and Verona, spent the nights over his maps, and was incessantly tormented by his passion!



The Arrival

RECEPTION AT MILAN — BONAPARTE'S IMPATIENCE
IN WHICH HE SHOWS THAT HE KNOWS MORE ABOUT WINNING A
BATTLE THAN HELPING A LADY TO UNDRESS
CONCERNING THE WISDOM OF KEEPING ONE'S WITS ABOUT
ONE AT CERTAIN TIMES

JOSEPHINE had reached the gates of Milan early one afternoon; she passed through one quarter of the city under arches of flowers, hailed by the cheers of the crowd, received like a queen by the leading men of the city. When her carriage reached the Serbelloni palace, all marble and pink granite, Bonaparte said to her, with concealed pride:

"Josephine — look! In there I shall become the happiest of men!"

He had prepared a fête for his wife's reception. He had felt that nothing could be too gorgeous. At once, having scarcely had time to change her dress, she found herself among brilliantly uniformed officers, ambassadors, artists, men of learning, attended by the prettiest women of the Lombard aristocracy, who paid her tribute with their eyes, were unsparing in their compliments, and seemed anxious only to do her honor.

Astonished, she looked around. Was all this for her, this luxury, this regal pomp, this homage that was so flattering to her vanity, this court like a queen's? And to

whom did she owe it! To this thin, febrile little man, with his amazing genius—her husband. Why had she been stupid enough to delay leaving her house in Paris, which, beside this palace, was a rat's nest?

But Bonaparte was hurrying the formalities. He wanted to have her all to himself. As yet, in public, he had not ventured to kiss her, but, forced to wait, he stroked her, squeezed her hands, and devoured her with ardent eyes. She knew he was beside himself; she trembled at the warmth of his breath on her shoulders. She smiled, flattered, her eyes half closed, for this ardor was the greatest tribute of all those that were offered to her that day.

Finally, almost carrying her, he led her up the marble staircase to their room. He had her at last!

The room was hung with brocades, and as full of flowers as a chapel. The noise of the city, far off, the trampling of horses in the paved courtyard, came through an open window. Josephine went to it to look out. The heavy perfume of the gardens made her suddenly a little faint. Before her, the gathering shadows of the dusk.

Bonaparte hurried to her side. His eyes swimming, he felt the warm body that fitted so perfectly close to his own. He trembled. Josephine prolonged her regard of the grounds, taking a malicious delight in tormenting him.

"Come, come!" he said, in the harsh voice of a man at the end of his endurance.

He took her in his arms, disrobing her clumsily, breaking her laces, tearing off buttons; his fingers were lost in linen and muslin. A fine perspiration broke out on his temples, under his black hair. It maddened him to see her skin so close, and yet not to be able to feel it moving under his hands like running water. Frantically, as he undressed

her, he kissed every part of her adored body. Josephine let him lay her down on the bed.

"Enough, Bonaparte!" she said. "You're killing me! You a general! If your staff could see you!"

He echoed her laugh. Then, kneeling, he tore off her stockings, and kissed the tip of her pretty foot.

Trembling, overwhelmed, she felt his hot lips caressing her. His hands clutched her breasts. Her head turned on the lace pillow. His embrace robbed her of any sense of space or time. In whose arms was she?

"Oh, my little Cha —"

She was betraying herself! A flash of intelligence came to her. This was not Charles, but Bonaparte.

"Oh, I love you!" she whispered, drawing him to her breast. "My little cat — my darling puss-in-boots!"



Milan

CHARLES IS WORRIED AND GIVES GOOD ADVICE
JOSEPHINE'S LIFE IN MILAN — THE DREAMY LOVER
LEAVING MILAN
JOURNEY TOWARD BRESCIA, CASTELNUOVO, PARMA AND FLORENCE
BONAPARTE'S TRIUMPH — AN ALLURING INVITATION
OFF TO GENOA — BONAPARTE'S ARRIVAL — NO JOSEPHINE!
DESPAIR — AND FIRST DOUBT

THEY had finished lunch, she and Charles, in the room in the Serbelloni Palace. The bed was unmade, and still warm. On a corner of the table were cold chicken, cakes, a bottle of *Lacrima-Christi*. Louise had just served coffee, and had discreetly gone out. Charles lifted the Sèvres cup to his lips.

"Splendid!" he said, relaxing carelessly, "life and my darling are very charming!"

"Charles," said Josephine, "I'm very worried."

"About money, darling? I heard yesterday of a great grain dealer who has several thousand bags for the army. He's ready to pay a commission to any one who can secure an order for him. Josephine, you've only to say a word to the quartermaster-general. I'll take care of the rest. It's money easily to be had."

"Thanks. I always need money! But just now it's not a question of money."

"Is there bad news from the front?"

"On the contrary, it's excellent."

"Is Bonaparte coming back?"

"I wish he were! Read this letter. I received it yesterday evening. I didn't want to worry you with it before I had to."

"You're an angel," he said, in a suddenly altered voice. An idea had struck him: Bonaparte had his suspicions! His hand trembling a little, he took the letter, and read it with frightened eyes.

There you are, well established, my adorable Josephine. I am consumed with delight at seeing you. You must have received the letter I sent you this morning by a courier. I am counting the minutes till the 7th. Three days yet! Murat is ill. The Goddess of the Ball, Mme. Ruga, certainly did him a favor! I have sent him to Brescia; he is furious. I beg you to tell Joseph of this, and advise him to be true to his Julie; he'll be the wiser and the healthier if he does. Heavens! What women — what morals! I make you my compliments frankly, and without reservations.

Your letters are cold; your heart isn't aflame for me. But then, I'm the husband! Some one else must be the lover. I suppose we must be like all the rest. But woe to him who lets me know that he has your love!

Love me. Imagine a thousand kisses, and be sure of all my love. At Brescia, on the 7th. — surely?

Charles breathed again. He was cynically cheerful.

"Think of this Murat! He deserved what he got! As for your husband, my dear, he turns a phrase admirably. He can write a letter — moreover, he's a good prophet! He does very well for a general. 'Some one else must be

the lover!' Ah, ah — yes, indeed! But we must be careful. Still, Josephine, I don't see what there is in this letter to worry you."

Under the English lace bonnet the Creole's eyes shone angrily.

"Don't you understand? Why, I must go to him at Brescia! In three days — on the battlefield itself! Can you see me in camp? It's horrible!"

Charles stared at her, appalled.

"This Bonaparte is insatiable! Isn't he satisfied with capturing cities?"

She slapped his face with her fan.

"You're impudent! But what am I to do? I'll die from fright down there."

"You must go, darling. Ah, it's hard for me to bear — but we must be careful. Go and satisfy this eager husband and come back quickly. Bonaparte is jealous, don't let's forget that. He'd be like a tiger. Imagine him if he took us by surprise here!"

Charles trembled at the thought, and it frightened Josephine no less.

"You're right, Charles. I'll give orders to make ready for the trip."

"Oh, I'll attend to that, my dear. Don't bother about matters beneath your notice — don't waste time you can devote to making me happy!"

He had taken her in his arms. Submissively she yielded, receiving his caress, eager for more.

Bonaparte had been able to spend only two days with her at Milan. Two days of ecstasy! Two nights of utter delight! On the 28th. Messidor he had been obliged to go

back to his quarters at Marmiolo, leaving her in the Serbelloni Palace.

She had shed only conventional tears over his departure. Bonaparte was already boring her with his amorous demands, exhausting her. He was never satisfied; he overwhelmed her with the evidences of a violent and gloomy passion.

He could think of love only in exalted terms, making too much of a simple and not very important matter, as she saw it. He quoted Virgil, Rousseau, Ossian, and called upon the classics and all mythology to support him! She, just a little Creole, very earthly, fond of pleasure, of sweets, couldn't follow him to those heights of human love whence the heart dominated the whole world.

She admired him, to be sure, and she was grateful to him for the life of ease she owed to him, and the luxury and adulation with which he surrounded her. She did take a certain pleasure in his passionate kisses, but she could have too many of them. His ardor was like too strong a wine, of which one wants only a little at a time.

She had quickly established herself in Milan, where she held a court not too severe in point of etiquette. Lazy mornings, intimate luncheons, balls, parties in the evenings, drives along the Corso, the theater, made up her days. Many gifts came to her, from all the great people of Lombardy, eager to get into the good graces of the victorious general's wife.

Each courier from France brought her the latest clothes, and she passed agreeable hours in arranging, in the Serbelloni Palace, new toilettes, in company with Mme. Regnault de Saint-Jean-d'Angely, Mme. Visconti, Berthier's mistress, and Mme. Hamelin, recently arrived

from Paris, who took a new lover nearly every day, as if she had bought a bag of sweetmeats to appease her gluttony.

Charles had resumed his relations with her. Invisible at first, he had, as soon as Bonaparte had gone, appeared from among her trunks, like a jack-in-the-box, and once more he attended to everything for her, was available when she needed a discreet messenger for delicate errands, appearing and disappearing with a tact and a cleverness that were almost miraculous.

Josephine would have been utterly happy except for the necessity of replying, from time to time, to Bonaparte's letters. Once more he had begun to besiege her with epistles in which military information was mingled with love-making. If the former left her indifferent, the latter found only a feeble echo in her heart. She would have been vastly surprised had any one told her that this little man, so restless and passionate, who was eaten up by love when he was parted from her, was about to make the world over with his feminine hands.

And now he insisted that she leave Milan, this splendid palace, Charles, so lively and submissive, her amusing friends, her pleasant, idle habits, to join him at Brescia! Why not in the front line, under the Austrian fire? Still, Charles was right. She must handle Bonaparte carefully. So she would go—but she would return as soon as possible!

She arrived at Brescia on the 8th. Thermidor. Bonaparte had arrived at Cassano the day before. On the 10th. she left, with him, for Castelnovo. Then, near Verona, finding herself in the midst of fighting, she planned to make a half circle and return to Brescia, but the enemy

had already cut the road. Bonaparte sent her back, in tears, under a strong escort. But, obliged to pass under the walls of Mantua, she heard the fire of the besieged, and thought she would die of fright.

Terrified, she crossed the Po, passed through Bologna and Parma, and finally reached Florence, where she could be free of her fears. But there was bad news; the issue of the campaign was in doubt. She took to the road again, and didn't really feel safe until she was back in Milan, disgusted forever with the idea of glory and the risks of war.

Meanwhile Bonaparte, who had sworn to take vengeance for the alarms to which she had been subjected, was reënforced. It was a critical time. Old Wurmser, with a new army, strongly reënforced, was advancing to relieve Mantua. Bonaparte beat him at Lonato, crushed him at Castiglione, crossed the Adige, won the battles of Roveredo and Bassano. Wurmser, cut to pieces, could only throw his army into Mantua.

But Bonaparte crowed too soon. The enemy rallied and checked him at Due Castelli. He lived through terrible weeks thereafter. Must he evacuate Lombardy? He could neither eat nor sleep; he spent his days on horseback, his nights poring over maps.

But he still found time to send short, fiery notes to his wife, the feverish phrases of which betrayed his anguish as a soldier, his will to conquer, and also his lover's heart, tormented by doubts and jealousy.

Finally came Arcola, the rout of Alvinzi, the final and utter defeat of the Austrians. Bonaparte had seized upon victory and held it firmly. Now he could relax, dream of rest, turn all his thoughts toward Milan.

VERONA, I FRIMAIRE, YEAR V.

I'm going to bed, little Josephine, my heart full of your adorable image and outdone by being away from you so long. But I hope to be luckier in a few days and that I shall be able, at my leisure, to give you proof of the ardent love you inspire in me.

You don't write to me, you don't think of your good husband, cruellest of women! Don't you know that without you, without your heart, without your love, there can be no rest, no happiness, no life, for me? Heavens, how happy I shall be to help you dress! That little shoulder, that little white breast, elastic and firm, and under it a little mole! You know how I remember my little visits . . . oh, you know. . . . A thousand kisses—I can't wait to see you. . . .

To live in Josephine is to live in Heaven! I kiss your mouth, your eyes, your shoulder, your breasts—all—all!

"Oh, this little Bonaparte—he's all excited again!" said Josephine, giggling.

Dreamily, she balanced his letter on the tips of her fingers, smiling at these burning words, flattered, after all, at having inspired such passion in a man whose fame every one was publishing. Louise Compoinet roused her.

"Madame, there's a messenger from the Genoese Republic, who wants to see you."

"Let him come in."

A young officer approached her, and on one knee, held out an envelope to her.

"Madame, my government has charged me to deliver this invitation to you."

Intrigued, she opened the letter, read it, and had all she could do not to clap her hands. The Senate of Genoa asked her to be present, four days later, at a festival in her honor in the Palace of the Doges.

Bonaparte was coming. But would it be wise to refuse an invitation so distinguished? And need Napoleon be so uxorious? Couldn't he wait a few days? In her head, so like a bird's, opposing ideas met. Bonaparte—the fête—the palace of the Doges. This would be a rare chance to wear that silver gown and the pink coat, trimmed with ermine, she had just received from Paris. She would take Charles and Fortune with her! It was too tempting. Her husband would be cross, perhaps, but she would be able to appease him, later. Moreover, she had an excuse ready to her hand for this sudden change of plan; she was undertaking this trip for reasons of state! She smiled at the young envoy.

"Say to the Senate, please, that it honors me greatly; I accept, with pleasure."

A conqueror, he hurried to his wife. She alone seemed to withhold from him the reward of his victories. Wasn't one kiss of Josephine's worth all the laurel wreaths in the world? One look from her, one word, counted for more than the cheering of multitudes.

He reached Milan, the Serbelloni Palace. He hurried up the marble stairs, stormed the door of their room. It was in disorder. Where was she? Was it possible that she hadn't been expecting him, that she wouldn't fly to his arms? He called her. "Josephine!" The echo of his voice came back, like a blow at his very heart. In a panic he groaned, rushed to find the servants.

"Where is Madame?"

His look was so terrible that they all answered him in fear. Each told what he knew. Madame had gone to Genoa in her berline . . . a fête — with Fortune — Louise — they thought, Captain Charles, too.

Napoleon frowned. Charles!

Ah! Yes! That coxcomb who hung about her, he had heard. That officer who knew only the smell of face powder, that clown whose dealings, behind the lines, with the army caterers, had already been reported to him. Could Josephine be in such infamous company?

But one thing was sure, and it was devastating. She had gone, knowing that he was coming — he who had risked his life a hundred times! She had gone, she had preferred this *fête* to him — she had left him for a ball, for the worship of other men! He flung himself on the bed, sobbing, burying his head, in despair, in the linen she had tossed there in the haste of her departure, which still retained the perfume of her body. Then he got up and strode about, trying to appease the monster that devoured him. But the sight of each empty room that did not contain Josephine only aggravated his suffering.

His veins were swollen and on fire, he was delirious. Perhaps a bath would soothe him. He plunged into the water, but, getting out of the tub, again distressed, he fainted. They made him lie down on a couch, and watched over him. A doctor, hastily called, was afraid he was seriously ill.

Next day he was beside himself. He had, at any cost, to go back to his headquarters at Verona, to watch over the final struggles of Wurmser and Alvinzi. But he did not leave without writing to his wife.

Surrounded by pleasure and diversion, you would make a mistake to sacrifice anything at all for my sake.

It's not my desire that you should change any of your plans nor give up any of the pleasures offered to you. I'm not worth it, and the happiness or the misery of a man you don't love need not concern you.

Gloomy, bitter, devoid of hope, he returned to Verona, for the first time really suspicious of Josephine.



Mombello

SOJOURN AT MOMBELLO CASTLE

BONAPARTE AS AN INSATIABLE LOVER — JOSEPHINE IS BORED
RETURN TO PARIS — CUCKOO! HERE IS CHARLES!

AT last Mantua was captured by the French and peace was signed with the Papacy. Bonaparte believed that now he could rest, organize victory, and share, with his wife, a little peace and a great deal of love. But the Austrians reared their heads again. The Emperor was not ready to concede defeat, and made an alliance with England. It was necessary to make him sue for peace, to strike at the heart of his empire — Vienna.

Bonaparte took the field again, left Josephine once more, and from the 20th. Ventose to the 24th. Germinal, in the year V, forced the road to the Austrian capital, by way of Bassano, Palmanova, Klagenfurt and Gratz. He forced the enemy to sign an armistice at Leoben.

Returning to Milan, he installed himself with Josephine at the Castle of Mombello, a princely residence worthy of his new fame. He dwelt there in a court of people who sought to attach themselves to his rising fortunes, and set about the creation of the Cisalpine Republic.

At last he had his wife to himself, with time to enjoy her company. He was unsparing of kisses and caresses.

He was like an exile with the years of his youth and great privations to make up.

Like a good girl, Josephine accepted his attentions, and returned them to the best of her ability. But, gradually she realized that even this exigent husband was approaching satiety.

He had forgiven her for the Genoese escapade, but its memory remained between them like an open wound. His letters were shorter; descriptions of battles; political disquisitions; less and less did they treat of love. Her intuition warned her that his passion for her was waning, that it was no longer fired by that spirit in which the flesh has less part than the heart.

Worried, she sought to regain the power she felt to be slipping from her hands. She was frightened to find that she was already beginning to feel herself of less importance than her husband, whose authority waxed daily, and whose ambition terrified her. She thought of displaying jealousy, of reproaching Napoleon for his interest in other women, for pursuing Grassini, whose contralto voice drew all Milan to the Scala Theater.

Bonaparte didn't find it hard to defend himself; he gave his wife all necessary reassurances; she was obliged to admit that he still loved her, and that, for the moment, she couldn't ask a better husband.

But she was bored at Mombello. Charles wasn't there; neither with her, nor in the neighborhood. He was the victim of Napoleon's justifiable anger. Caught in the very act of lying, he had been imprisoned, was threatened by trial by court-martial. Only the desperate intervention of Josephine, of Junot and of Duroc had saved him, at the

last moment, from a firing squad. Bankrupt, cashiered from the army, he had been obliged to leave Italy.

"He must take himself off," Bonaparte had written, in ordering his release.

Deprived of this tender clown, everything depressed Josephine. She was tired of her restless life, of the continual fêtes, of gala dinners, of receptions for ambassadors, of a régime so strict that it allowed for no pleasantries.

Moreover, she had to be on her guard. The whole Bonaparte family, headed by Mme. Letitia, had come to Mombello. She knew that she was spied upon, that she was in danger of the malevolence of this greedy tribe of relatives, which was jealous of her and could not forgive her influence over Napoleon, which it believed to be prejudicial to its interests. She longed to return to Paris and her own small house, in which she had lived without state, but with an agreeable indifference to detail.

But what pretext could she find for suggesting such a return? She remembered that she had left her children behind; she felt a sudden, urgent need of them. Would Bonaparte be touched by her distress? He was aware of it. What would he decide?

"My Josephine, only say the word. I will send Junot to Paris at once, and he will bring Hortense and Eugene to you."

She saw no more hope of escape. She must resign herself. But, all at once, everything was changed. Napoleon had negotiated the treaty of Campo-Formio. He planned to take it to Paris and submit it himself to the Directory. That would be the culmination of his triumph.

He left in the middle of December, to reach Paris by crossing Switzerland, taking the shortest route. But,

strange to say, he did not insist on taking his wife with him. Like a good husband, he wanted to spare her the exhausting fatigues of so swift a journey. She was to go back to Paris by easy stages, following the most comfortable road.

Concealing her delight, Josephine too set out. She crossed Lombardy, passed through the Alps, came to the Dauphiné. One evening, as it grew dark, just after they had crossed the border, the berline stopped. A tiny man, excited and eager, leaped on the step, opened the door, leaped inside. The postillions heard laughter, the sound of kisses, the voice of Josephine.

"My Punchinello! At last! Oh, how happy I am, my dearest Punchinello!"



The Egyptian Expedition

DEPARTURE FOR EGYPT — NO MORE HUSBAND
NOW FOR PLEASURE — IN WHICH SHE SEES CHARLES AGAIN
HIS MANY ARTS — BONAPARTE'S ALARMING SILENCE
UNDER THE EGYPTIAN SUN
BONAPARTE LEARNS THAT HE HAS BEEN BETRAYED — HIS ANGER
A DRAMATIC INQUIRY — DECISION FOR DIVORCE

THE May sun seemed to reflect all the blue of the sky in the sea. The roadstead of Toulon swarmed with ships; battleships, frigates, transports. The greater part of the fleet which was to carry Bonaparte's army to Egypt was gathered there. Not far from the shore, the *Orient*, ship of the line, which was to carry the general, and upon which he was almost at once to embark, was anchored, all sails set.

On the wharf Bonaparte gave his final orders in a curt, unmoved voice. Josephine and his secretary, Bourrienne, still so fat and so pink, were with him, and some officers of his staff. Junot was delighted at the idea that there would soon be active service; Berthier, lugubrious of mien, inconsolable because he must leave his mistress, Mme. Visconti, bit his nails.

A cannon shot rang out. Napoleon turned to his wife, while the officers turned away, discreetly.

"Josephine — there's the signal! Good-by. No doubt

we shall see one another before long. It won't take me long to bring these English dogs to heel! I shall deal them a blow in a vital spot. As soon as I can, I will send for you. When the sea is safer, a frigate will come for you. Meanwhile, you are to take the cure at Plombières, as we have agreed. I'm taking your son Eugene with me—I think we'll make an excellent aide-de-camp out of him. Don't worry about him—I'll see that nothing happens to him."

Meekly, with downcast eyes, she nodded her head. She was depressed and astonished. Was this husband, so completely master of himself as he left her, the same who, upon going to Italy, had only torn himself from her arms with tears and sobs? Didn't the change in him show her how much of her power over him she had lost?

"I was forgetting!" said Bonaparte. "I have left money with my brother Joseph. He'll pay you an allowance of 40,000 francs a quarter. That will be enough for you, I imagine?"

She smiled to hide a grimace, and said, her voice shaken: "Oh, Napoleon, when you are away, I need so little!"

He drew her to him and gave her a soldier's kiss; the kiss of a soldier who had finally made his choice between duty and love, between fame and a woman who has revealed all her secrets.

Josephine stayed on the wharf, waving her scarf. Amid the salutes of guns, the chanteys of the seamen and the cheers of the crowd, the squadron got under way. When the *Orient* had reached midstream Josephine went away, her face veiled, her bosom heaving, her figure bowed as if by a sudden blow. Louise Compoin, who had joined her, was astonished by her despair.

"Madame — you must be sensible!"

For a moment Josephine looked at her maid, who shrank away, frightened by the gleaming eyes and bitter smile of her mistress.

"Sensible? You're right! I shall make sense out of a thousand follies!"

Had she been alone she would have danced for joy, as she had, long ago, at Trois Îlets, when Marion tried on a new dress for her, or brought her a necklace of shells and coral. . . .

Bonaparte was off again! She was delighted, freed from an unbearable constraint. The air of freedom was enchantingly sweet. She had just spent four dreary months in the Rue de Chantereine, now called the Rue de la Victoire — a delicate compliment to Bonaparte.

Since her return from Italy she had taken part in several great festivals in honor of the victorious general, and had attended a ball Talleyrand had given in the rooms of the Hôtel Gallifet, the splendor of which had astonished all Paris.

But, thereafter, Napoleon had shut himself up in the house, which he had bought and given to Josephine, devoting himself to work and study. He had received only a few intimate friends, Junot, Berthier, artists such as David, some important writers, Arnault, Bernardin de St.-Pierre, a few politicians, Barras and Cambacères.

No women! Bonaparte regarded all of Josephine's women friends as undesirable. Compelled to live like a little bourgeoisie, forbidden to go out, to amuse herself, separated from Mme. Tallien, Mme. Hamelin and other pretty wantons, the Creole had been bored to death. Could

a young woman be expected to listen only to the austere dissertations of pedants concerning war, the arts, and politics? Moreover, she didn't like the house, refurnished in the fashion of the day, with its classical decorations, cold and remote, destructive of all intimacy.

Meanwhile Bonaparte had been obsessed again by his fixed idea, the destruction of England. The English! His Corsican heart was inflamed with rage at the hated name. He would make them pay dearly for having dared to set foot on his island, for having hunted him and his relatives, and reduced them to poverty. He had a personal score to settle with them. Ah, they'd stop laughing at him when they saw him land, with his army, on their chalk cliffs!

He made his plans, went to visit the northern coast and its arsenals. But supplies, munitions and ships were lacking. He deemed an invasion of England too risky. No matter! He would find another way of damaging that accursed country, in the East, in India, wherever its rapacious hand had fallen. The land of the Pharaohs in the hands of France, it would be child's play to sweep the British from the Mediterranean.

The expedition might seem perilous, but the Corsican had a persuasive tongue. He gained the support of Talleyrand, who had the ear of most of the directors. Barras let himself be persuaded. He was not, after all, sorry to see this general who owed everything to him, but seemed unwilling to acknowledge his debt any longer, go off to seek new adventures. He had been his patron — wasn't he, Barras, by way of becoming the other's protégé? Napoleon had teeth, and showed them freely. Barras was like a man who picks up a stray kitten in the street, to rid his

attic of mice, and discovers, all at once, that he is playing host to a lion cub that will soon be fully grown. To satisfy him for a time, and appease his voracity, Barras was glad to throw this savage beast of prey far, far away — Egypt. He hoped he might break his neck there!

Accordingly, Bonaparte organized his expedition, obtained credits, caused ships to be built, trained his troops, saw to everything himself, and left nothing to chance. He took with him scholars who were to study the relics of ancient Egyptian civilizations, laborers and machines to colonize the country. The English might well despair; he was sure that he would bring back the leopard's skin from the land of the Pyramids.

Josephine stayed a few days in Toulon. She relaxed, delighted to be able to sleep, eat, sing, play cards, walk where she pleased, without the fear of being brought up by the orders of a husband smitten with a taste for precision and order, a declared enemy of all frivolity.

She was quite sure she would never go to Egypt, and the very thought gave her more pleasure in this stay at the seashore, amid flowers and orange trees, caressed by soft winds the aroma and the warmth of which reminded her a little of the West Indies. It was still too early to go north and go to take the waters among the Vosges.

The doctors had ordered her to Plombières; she was suffering from stomach trouble. But she was anticipating another miracle at that resort.

She had heard that its waters, restoring the vital organs, made it easier for women to bear children. A child! She knew that if she made him a father she would gratify Bonaparte's dearest wish. It was only necessary to see how

he grew pale with joy at the very idea that she might give him a child, and, alas, to remember his disappointment, his resentful silence when, month after month, he realized that he had again been deceived.

What a weapon a child would be for her! She would reënforce her dominion over Napoleon, regain all that she had lost, attach him to her forever. And, above all, so she would assure her triumph over the Bonapartes, put herself beyond the power of their intrigues and their spite; she would scourge them with an umbilical cord!

Early in June she started, making her way by easy stages up the valley of the Rhone, stopped over at Valence, and reached Lyons. Charles was waiting for her there. Not for a long time had he been her traveling companion.

He hadn't changed. He was as gay as ever, as ready to amuse her with his buffooneries, and, happily, as eager a lover. There was only one alteration in him: he was in mufti, but he was dressed in the height of the style, and looked extraordinarily well in a short coat and hussar trousers that were molded to his limbs.

He had gone into business now to earn a living, and represented the Bodin company, a great enterprise engaged in the business of supplying the army, which, after enjoying much success, had now fallen upon evil days, and seemed to be headed toward bankruptcy. But Charles was quite sure that he could, by himself, restore it. He had boldness and enterprise, and dealt in commercial affairs with the ease and voluptuous grace of a carp in a pond of goldfish.

Josephine's first care, after meeting Charles, was to write to Barras and ask him to use his influence with General Brune for the Bodin company, and to obtain for

it an order that would restore its prosperity. Then she said to her young lover:

"Charles — it's understood? You'll come to Plombières with me."

He bowed, and Josephine was radiant. Charles's presence was insurance enough against melancholy. Besides, he was capable of supplementing the effects of the cure at Plombières, and perhaps of supplying a virtue lacking in the waters. Bonaparte hadn't been gone more than two weeks; he would swallow the pill whole, and be delighted.

But no sooner had she arrived at Plombières than a distressing accident occurred. She was on a balcony when the railing gave way, and she fell to the ground from a height of more than four meters, and was badly bruised. They took her, fainting, inside, and cared for her. Charles helped in applying compresses and bathing her with liniment. He excelled in such tasks as in all others — except those of war and real work.

But Josephine had suffered a severe shock; it took her weeks to recover. Charles didn't enjoy the rôle of nurse. Pretending that urgent business called him to Paris, he disappeared. And, parted again from her lover, Josephine found her convalescence tedious. She was bored in spite of the attentions heaped upon her, the parties that were given for her. She was worried. Napoleon's letters were less frequent, and, it seemed to her, colder. And she heard nothing from Joseph and Lucien. She wondered what these Bonapartes were doing against her in Paris. It was well to be on the spot to watch these people, from whom she could expect only the worst treatment.

Finally she was able to leave, and reached Paris just in time to learn that Napoleon's fleet had been destroyed

at Aboukir and that the English were masters of the Mediterranean.

Gizeh. Though it was evening, the heat was stifling. The desert stretched out endlessly in fiery waves. Above it the sky was like a white hot disc of metal. The setting sun threw the triangular shadow of the pyramid on the sand.

In his tent, a tiny pyramid at the foot of the huge one, Bonaparte suffered less from the heat than from sharp anguish and a sudden rebellion of his spirit. The mail from France had come. It was on his table. Among the papers was a letter from Lucien, countersigned by Joseph. He had already read and reread it a dozen times, doubting his eyes and his understanding.

"No! No! It's impossible! They're lying! Josephine can't have betrayed me so! To be so shameless she would have to have the soul of a fiend! They want to ruin her — I shall know how to protect her!"

But a poisonous doubt had found lodgment in his mind. It oppressed his heart with an unbearable sadness. He drew Josephine's portrait from his breast and questioned it with haggard eyes.

"Say you haven't done that! You wouldn't have dared! Speak!"

The portrait smiled at him, remote, mysterious, ironic. With a furious gesture he flung it away. Oh, to know — to be sure! Anything rather than this terrible doubt! But how was he to learn the truth? Whom could he ask? A clear thought came to him. Berthier? Bourrienne? Junot? Junot, above all! These were his true friends. They would speak. They must know the truth about Josephine. After

all, wasn't it the rule that the husband was the last to hear such tidings? He ran out of his tent, calling:

"Junot! Bourrienne! Berthier!"

The secretary and the two officers hurried up.

"My friends," he said, in an agitated voice, "I don't want to discuss military matters with you. This matter concerns me most deeply. I appeal to your hearts, your sense of duty. My brothers Joseph and Lucien write to tell me that my wife is behaving scandalously, that she has a lover, named Charles. They say he continued to be intimate with her in Italy until I dismissed him, that she resumed her relations with him on her return, and that he traveled with her in her carriage to within three posts of Paris. They have been seen together in an enclosed box at the Italiens. They add that Barras received her favors, and Murat, too. Murat—even if there were no others—Murat!"

He stopped, panting; his voice was raucous. He held the three men under his eye.

"How much truth is there in all this?"

Silence. What! Was there no one to say a word in Josephine's defense? His demand had been so abrupt that his three comrades had not had the time to consult. Berthier bit his fingers; Bourrienne stammered:

"General—they have exaggerated—I can't believe that your wife—"

Bonaparte turned from him and stared at Junot.

"You must know—you! You lived near her in Paris. You accompanied her on her journey. You can see that I am perfectly calm. Tell me the truth. I no longer love her. You will be doing me a service."

His voice had taken on the tone of an entreaty. Junot,

a man incapable of deceit, bowed his head, grew red, then white; kept still. It was repugnant to him to accuse a woman.

"Ah — then it's true! If it weren't you would deny it. I know enough. Go — leave me alone — go, all of you."

Alarmed, the officers left him. His eyes like a mad-man's, foam on his lips, Bonaparte strode about in his tent and filled it with the clamor of his rage.

"The slut—to have treated me so! When I have loved her so much! Has she played with me long enough? Ah, this Charles—this scamp who deserved to be hung! And I had his life in my hands! Miserable wretch, if I had closed them he would have been dead! And it's this worm she has preferred to me! To me—who lived only for her, who gave her wealth and honors! I, who have laid kingdoms at her feet! He gave her a little dog, and nothing else mattered! Ah — ah — and Barras! And Murat, whom I loved like a brother! All — all —"

He was stifled. He felt himself crucified less through love than through pride. What sort of heart had she, this woman whom he had adored as if she had been a celestial being, as pure as an angel? Could one really have such love for so unworthy an object? His unhappiness was complete, his shame was known to all. Every one must be laughing at him! But no! This slut wouldn't play with him any longer; he would divorce her. It would be a shameful divorce; disgrace should recoil upon her, this adulterous woman should be exposed to the contempt of all France! And the sooner the better.

He stopped, seated himself at his desk, and in a hand that gradually grew firmer, wrote to Joseph:

My friend, I expect to return to France very soon. What I hear requires that I return promptly. I received your letter by way of Tunis. Arrange matters so that my divorce may be announced on my arrival. I am sending you authority to act for me. My resolution is irrevocable. I know that you will approve. But I am, nevertheless, very unhappy. Still, I am 29; I shall forget. Other cares will console me; my family, my country.

Be my friend, I need you sorely. You will always be dear to me. Good-by, Joseph—I embrace you and your wife.

When he had signed his name Napoleon paused, grief-stricken. Two tears ran down his sallow cheeks. The words once written, his anger had given way to a terrible grief. He flung his attenuated body on the cot, shaken by sobs. He was no longer anything but a wretched man who wept over the ruin of his happiness, and was left without faith in anything.



Malmaison

THE PURCHASE OF MALMAISON

QUARREL WITH JOSEPH AND LUCIEN — JOSEPHINE GETS INTO DEBT

HAPPY LIFE! DAPHNIS AND CHLOE

WHAT HAS BECOME OF BONAPARTE?

JOSEPHINE THINKS OF DIVORCE

CHARLES REFUSES TO MARRY HER — NAPOLEON'S RETURN

AN APPALLING SITUATION

THE ART OF MAKING BLACK SEEM WHITE

A TOUCHING RECONCILIATION

JOSEPH never received that letter. An English cruiser in the Mediterranean must have captured it. So Josephine continued to live in Paris without warning of the gathering storm.

She rearranged her life, renewed old friendships, made friends again with her old adorer, Gohier, now at the head of the Directory, and became intimate with Rousselin, secretary of the Minister of War, a person to be cajoled, and from whom favors and benefits were to be had. And she put in train a project she had harbored for a long time. She bought Malmaison, which she had admired from afar ever since, under the Terror, she had gone to Croissy-sur-Seine, to visit Mme. Hortense Lamothe in her little house.

A long white building, with a farm beside it, and with

grounds of 129 hectares, woods and vineyards, such was Malmaison. It was a lordly domain, rather than a castle. The proportions of the house pleased her taste; it promised discretion and intimacy. One could be at home there, and still entertain freely. The trees were beautiful; a little landscaping would make the park delightful.

M. Leconteulx, its owner, asked 300,000 francs. That figure didn't alarm the Creole, although she didn't have a penny toward such a sum, nor, at the moment, any notion of how to go about procuring it. Joseph was no longer either sending her her allowance nor even replying to her requests.

"Let him keep his money!" she said, crossly. "I know where to get all I want."

It seemed to her that the Bonapartes had changed from an armed neutrality to an openly hostile attitude. That was, of course, disturbing. They must be very sure of their ground to take an open stand against her. She had everything to fear from them. For the moment they were making free use of the funds left by Napoleon. Joseph had bought the princely house of Mortefontaine, and Lucien had made himself a present of Plessis-Charmant. But when the general returned he would know how to draw their teeth!

Meanwhile Josephine, once again, was forced to live by her wits. She used her jewels, levied upon Rousselin. Yet she continued to treat for the purchase of Malmaison. Finally the deed was signed; she acquired the whole property, the house fully furnished, for 261,000 francs. As for the 15,000 francs she was supposed to pay down, she gave Leconteulx's agent her note.

She moved in, she was at home, comfortable and well

suited. She was no longer worried by the idea that she must find a solution for formidable problems. Only the present mattered—and the present was not without charm.

The house was gay. Good friends came from Paris, the Talliens, the Gohiers, the Récamiers, Barras and Real. There were parties, song, dancing. Nothing was planned; there were no rules. Josephine was most attentive to the Gohiers, who had a son. What an excellent match he would be for Hortense, who was nearly sixteen!

She liked Malmaison especially because it was so near Paris. If she were bored, she dressed, ordered her coupé and climbed in, with all her folderols and her "Minerva" hat or her jockey's cap. A word to the coachman and she was in Paris!

There she found, once more, all the friends who made life worth living, Mme. Tallien, Mme. Hamelin, Mme. Récamier, Mme. Chateaurenaud, and all the lovers and friends of these ladies. In the robes of priestesses, in thin gowns of rosy silk, thighs bare under transparent gowns, they went to the theater, to dances, to cabarets. They danced at the Tivoli or Ranelagh, and supped at Frascati's. They mingled with courtesans, so far from them in station, but so much like them at heart! And a score of enterprising beaux assured them of the power of their charms.

After a few days of such orgies, Josephine, exhausted, went back to Malmaison—but not alone. Charles had come back to her. How could she live without him? Charles liked Malmaison. He had his place at the table, his own room. They spoiled him, tempted him. He liked particularly a raspberry wine made on the estate. This

aged in the cellars; he emptied bottle after bottle. His libations kept him in good humor and made him amorous.

He and Josephine played at being shepherd and shepherdess. This rural and idyllic life kept them passionate and young. And now Charles showed himself a master of the flute. They walked sentimentally by moonlight or at dusk, they listened to the nightingales, they picked flowers beside the brooks; Josephine found all these things ennobling; they gave her the heart of a young girl once more.

Josephine found herself more and more attached to this lover, who made life so sweet for her. The thought of Bonaparte only came, now, to plague her. She began to wonder what had become of him. She had heard nothing from him for more than six months. Since the defeat at Aboukir communication with Egypt had been cut off. What was he doing there? Was he dead, or a prisoner? Had he turned Turk? This time the proudest of men seemed really to be beaten. But such was the fate of all the generals! Ambition destroyed them. She had warned him of that. Even if he succeeded in getting back to France, would he be much better off? Bernadotte was plotting against him, and suggesting that he must, when he returned, be brought before a court-martial.

All things considered, Josephine felt herself to be in a sorry plight. It would be better to cut her losses and make new arrangements. First, she must divorce him; Gohier would arrange that and hasten the proceedings for her. He had many reasons to agree, the chief of which — though he didn't say so — was that he loathed Bonaparte. Then she must find a new husband. In spite of herself, she thought of Charles. Why not? He had a

genius for intrigue; he would be successful in dealings in exchange or in banking. There was something more certain than the profession of arms. She had offered to induce Barrás to secure his reinstatement in the army, but he had refused. He was a sensible boy.

Thanks to her connections, she could push his fortunes, obtain profitable contracts for him. She saw him becoming Ouvrard's equal. Nor was she herself without means. She had a jewel chest worth a small fortune. Looking at it in cold blood, she was by no means ineligible.

To be sure, Charles was at least ten years younger than she. But under artificial light she was still handsome, and it would suit her well enough to have a passionate husband younger than herself. That would prolong her own youth and assure — a pleasant prospect — many years of lovemaking.

Skillfully, she approached Charles, making him see how well he would be doing for himself if he married her. He pretended to think she was joking. He accepted, but not without having reminded her, unkindly, that she no longer had the freshness of a young girl, and that she was in debt. He twisted and turned, alternating between withdrawals and vehement outbursts, oaths of eternal devotion. Finally he withdrew, with a gesture that enabled him to get out of making a definite promise.

Josephine understood. Undeceived, she wept with as much regret for her wounded pride as for her lost lover. But she was not beaten yet. If Charles was fool enough to refuse her, she would find some one else. Bonaparte's wife, thank Heaven, would not find it hard to win a husband!

But now, like a thunderclap, coming no one knew

how, startling news arrived. Bonaparte had taken Jaffa, had routed the Turks at Mount Tabor and, on land, at Aboukir. He had conquered Egypt. Josephine grew thoughtful. Had she made a mistake? Suppose Bonaparte came back suddenly, covered with new glory, even richer than when he went away! She had been rash. She was made to understand her error. Talleyrand turned his back upon her; Barras was cold to her. Her behavior had been too scandalous. She felt the disapproval of all about her.

Yet it was too early to despair. Bonaparte was still the husband most to be counted upon. She must conquer him anew when he came back, persuade him that, in spite of appearances, she had never ceased to love him nor to be true to him. This was an undertaking that would have frightened any other woman, but it appealed like a new game to Josephine, who knew how to deal with men and make them believe anything.

She waited, fully armed, sure that she would win. One day, while she was dining with the Gohiers, the news came. Bonaparte was in the harbor of Frejus. She got up from the table, excusing herself, and went home. A letter from her son, brought in the same post, confirmed the news. Napoleon would be in Paris in two days. She had forty-eight hours — more than she needed for her purpose! She would meet him, anticipate the attacks of Joseph and Lucien, be so fond, so sweet, so amorous, that she would circumvent them.

She ordered the berline to be harnessed. She, who hated traveling, prepared herself to go with a feverish alacrity. Just as she set out she hesitated: What route would Bonaparte follow? Would he come by way of Burgundy or

through Beaujolais? A difficult decision — and one on which, perhaps, her whole future rested.

"Go by Sens and Auxerre," suggested Real, who was helping her to get away.

She started. At each town she stopped, anxiously, to make inquiries. No; General Bonaparte had not been seen. She pressed on, beset by an increasing anxiety.

At Lyons she learned that Bonaparte had passed through twelve hours ago, going north by the other road. Here was a disastrous chance! But perhaps, forcing the horses, she might overtake him. She turned. The carriage was driven at breakneck speed. The relays were made with as much haste as possible, the post-boys whipped the horses on. Hanging from the door, her hair swept by the wind, Josephine looked ahead. There — far ahead — that carriage, those horsemen? Was it he? No! She passed through Nevers, Cosne, Fontainebleau. It was useless. Bonaparte had too long a start. She must give up the idea of meeting him.

It was too late! Napoleon was in the power of his brothers. Josephine had lost the game. Discouraged, she fell back upon the cushions of the carriage and wept tears of rage and despair.

As soon as Joseph learned that Bonaparte was nearing Paris he went to meet him on the Fontainebleau road. The brothers met in a long embrace. Joseph looked pitifully at his exhausted brother, who seemed to be devoured by some disease.

"My poor Napoleon, it's high time you had some rest!"

"By all means, my friend! Now that my divorce has

been granted, I must look ahead. I am tired! By the way, I am obliged to you for attending to all the legal proceedings."

"Your divorce—the proceedings? I don't understand! Josephine is still your wife, alas! And I must tell you that she is still dishonoring the name of Bonaparte with a perseverance that would be admirable if it were directed to some worthy object."

Napoleon was amazed.

"What? Didn't you receive the letter in which I gave you full authority to arrange this divorce as quickly as possible?"

"I don't know what you mean, Napoleon! I received no such letter. No doubt the English seized it."

"What a disaster! Oh, that was all I needed, after all the rest! Well, I must attend to it myself, and the sooner the better."

So Josephine was still his wife! Strangely enough, this news, instead of angering him, was curiously agreeable; it lightened his heart. Yet this annoyed him, too.

"She'd better not hope for any pity from me!"

"You're right. She deserves none. Where will you go to-night?"

"Home—Rue de la Victoire."

"Napoleon, that's unwise. Josephine will leave nothing undone to entrap you."

"I shall know how to guard against that, Joseph, if she comes. I am impatient to come to an understanding with her."

"Oh, how little you understand that woman! Beware of her! She knows how to lie, she is clever. You will let

yourself be persuaded, you are so kindly. Come home with me, my house is open to you."

Bonaparte's eyes gleamed.

"What do you take me for? I'm not a weakling. Make up your mind to it — once I have reached a decision the antics of a woman won't make me put off its execution. If I weren't sure of myself I would pluck my heart from my bosom and throw it in the fire! Leave me, Joseph — I'll see you soon. And please ask Lucien to come to see me to-morrow morning."

Night was falling as, with a firm step, he entered the house. He went to meet Josephine as he might have marched against an enemy, frowning, tense with the desire to get the business over with as soon as possible.

"Where is Madame?" he asked Agatha, the new maid, who, terrified, flinched before him.

"Madame — she went away two days ago to meet you, General! Did you miss one another, then?"

"Yes — but no matter. As soon as she returns, tell her I am waiting for her in my room; she is to come to me at once!"

She had gone to meet him! What a farce! He was likely to believe that! Where was she gadding at this hour? He crossed the drawing room, climbed the narrow stairs, and entered the bedroom. A strong scent of jasmine met him. He recoiled, as from a blow in the face. Ah, he ought never to have come to this house! Josephine wasn't here. She had fled from him. This ruse weakened Napoleon. His anger, without an immediate object, collapsed.

From all sides, from every familiar object around him,

insidious memories appealed to him and stifled his bitterness and rancor. She had been sitting in that chair the night he had knelt to unlace her shoes and kiss her bare feet. From that window they had leaned, side by side, to breathe the fresh night air. In that bed, by the miraculous and generous gift of her body, she had made him a superman. . . .

The air, it seemed to him, was still tremulous with the echo of her voice, perfumed by the scent of her body, colored by her presence. The atmosphere of this house was full of memories. With an angry gesture he tried to banish these misty recollections. No — there had been Bar-ras, Murat, Charles! Hadn't she betrayed him in the most cynical way?

But a mysterious frailty beset him. Why had fate had to treat him so? He thought of the happiness with which he should have shared with her the rapture of their kisses, after so long a separation, the peace of body and spirit appeased and satisfied. . . . A terrible distress possessed him. He turned to the large portrait of his wife.

"Josephine — why have you treated me so?"

He heard a carriage. He started, and hurried to the window. The traveling berline entered the courtyard. It was she. Then they hadn't lied to him! He drew back, frightened. In a few minutes she would come into the room. Now he was afraid of meeting her face to face. He rallied; furious at his own weakness. No! No! She would weep and plead in vain, he wouldn't forgive her, he wasn't so cowardly as that! But he knew that he lacked the strength to see her, listen to her, resist her. He looked about for a means of escape. Too late! Only one recourse was left to him. He could refuse to see her. He closed

and locked the door, and sank, exhausted, into a chair.

He heard a hurried step on the stairs. It was Josephine. Still dusty from her journey, she was running, spent with fatigue. Bonaparte heard a timid knock on the door.

"Napoleon! It's I!"

He was silent.

"Bonaparte — do you hear me? It is I, your Josephine."

She tried the handle of the door. He got up.

"My dear, what is the matter with you? Are you ill? Open the door for me. No? What has happened? Ah, I know! You're angry because you didn't find me waiting for you at home! But I went to meet you! It's not my fault that I missed you — Napoleon!"

He was walking around the room now, taking great strides, as if to escape the words which pursued him.

"Dearest, you are there. I hear you. Why won't you see me? What have I done? Can it be true? Have they told you dreadful things about me? It must have been your brothers. I know them. The cowards — to attack a defenseless woman! And you believe them! You have been cruel enough to hurt me so! Oh, you don't love me!"

Her voice grew wild in that hostile silence. Her little fists beat angrily on the door. Napoleon was firm. No! He would not yield. He knew the strength of this woman, her duplicity, the falseness of her kisses!

She was in despair. This accursed door that would not open! If she could only turn the fire of her eyes upon him, hold him one moment in her arms, she was sure she could conquer him anew!

"Darling — you shall listen to me! You won't condemn me without hearing me? I was so happy at your return! I've bought you a country house, knowing how much

you would need rest. I haven't slept for two nights, I was so sure that we'd be meeting the next minute. Oh — you're trying to frighten me, aren't you? You will open the door — oh, I want to lose myself in your arms! We'll make love, all alone, at Malmaison. I need your lips, your arms — Won't you speak? Oh — you're cruel — you're ungrateful!"

Her voice had grown somber. It was now just the tearful plea of an unhappy child. She sank to her knees and wrung her hands. Bonaparte could hear the swift panting of her breath. He walked up and down in the room like a madman, his fingers in his ears, his eyes fixed upon the lock. He spread out his hands toward the key, then withdrew them as if they were touching red-hot iron. He wished he could tie his hands, so that they could not open the door.

He struggled with himself, perspiring, calling to his support odious pictures of her behavior. Josephine in the arms of Barras, of Charles, or of Murat! Murat! Barras! Charles! He repeated those names like an incantation to exorcise the spell of her voice.

"Napoleon, my dearest —" She had begun again. "Have pity! Don't you know how you're torturing me? If I've done wrong, won't you forgive me? Only — let me see you — speak to me. Accuse me — at least, then, I can defend myself. What have they told you about me? What have your brothers been able to invent? It's true that I love pleasure, luxury, money. I may have been imprudent — I'm only a woman, after all. But I have never been untrue to you. If appearances are against me — don't believe in them! I am still your Josephine, worthy of your love. I love you — I have never loved any one but you — I'll die if you abandon me!"

She listened, stricken with anguish. Nothing! He didn't move; nothing she had said had touched him. His heart was of iron. Sobbing, she rose, and crushed, stole away, giving up the fight. But Agatha Rible stopped her, putting Eugene and Hortense forward.

"Madame," she said, "don't give up like that! Insist again! All isn't lost. Let your children mingle their prayers with yours — the general can't resist that."

Meekly, Josephine let them lead her back to the door. And Eugene, coached by Agatha, cried out:

"General! I beg you not to make my mother suffer any longer! If she has given you reason to reproach her, I ask you, in her name, for forgiveness. But I'm sure that she has been misrepresented to you. I know her love for you — it couldn't be purer. General, we are here, Hortense and I. We love you — you know that. Don't break our hearts."

Deeply moved by the voice of this boy, whose upright and loyal spirit he knew and appreciated, stirred to his depths by the sobs of Hortense and Josephine, whose forehead beat against the door at each sob, Bonaparte, tried to the limit of his endurance, passed his hand across his brow. It was too much! He rushed to the door, turned the key, and appeared, livid, his hair in disorder, his eyes haggard. Josephine flung herself into his arms. She embraced him, flung her bare arms around him; all the witchery of her freely offered body tempted him, as she mingled her tears with his and suppressed, with her apt lips, the final stirrings of his rebellion against her domination.

"You! You! Oh, I knew you still loved me!"

Beaten, his eyes closed, he admitted defeat with a

bitter and savage delight, while she led him toward the bed as if he had been indeed the victim of her arms.

It was broad day when, in the morning, Agatha entered the room in which Bonaparte, replete with love, slept in Josephine's arms.

"General," she said, "your brother, Citizen Lucien, has been downstairs for an hour. He insists on seeing you."

Bonaparte stirred, woke, and looked inquiringly at his wife.

"Let him come up," said Josephine.

And, pinching her husband, she added:

"After all — he's one of the family!"

When Agatha had gone she took a mirror from her dressing table, patted her hair into place, donned a lace cap, and powdered her nose.

Lucien stopped, aghast, in the door; amazed by what he saw he took a backward step.

"Come in, my dear Lucien!" said Josephine, with a mocking smile. "Need you be put to flight by the sight of a second honeymoon? Your heart is too kind not to be rejoiced by the sight of your brother's happiness! Look at him — he has no nightshirt! That's probably why he's happy!"



Consul for Life

GOOD NEWS ILL RECEIVED — A JEALOUS SCENE
BONAPARTE'S REVENGE

BONAPARTE entered Josephine's reading room with a brisk step. This was a narrow room, decorated with green silk, and full of pieces of rosewood and marquetry, which served as bookcases. The general was in undress uniform, green, with lilac trimming. He was pale under the stress of some deep emotion.

"Josephine!"

The Creole, who was alone, sunk in the depths of an armchair, book in hand, rose with an undulating movement of her supple body to meet her husband.

"Josephine!" he said, exultantly. "It's done! The Senate has just pronounced the decree. I am Consul for life! After the vote of the people, it could do nothing else. Do you hear, Josephine? Consul for life! Now you, who have always been so fearful for the future, can rest easy. We need no longer fear reverses. I hold the first place in the republic! But—look at me! You don't seem pleased!"

She bowed her head. Silence fell between them. Outside the traffic sounded like the beating of a distant heart. Through the closed windows they could see the trees in

the garden of the Tuileries, over which hung the heavy heat of an August afternoon.

"Have you nothing to say?" said Bonaparte. "Doesn't the news please you at all, then?"

"Oh, of course, Napoleon — I'm satisfied, since you are so pleased. But — I'm afraid for you. You are always seeking to climb higher — you don't seem to realize how increasingly you are surrounded by people envious of your success. They're only waiting for a chance to destroy you."

"Oh, a faction, perhaps! But the people love me, Josephine. There were less than 4,000,000 votes — and 3,568,000 wanted me to be Consul for life, remember."

"That's reassuring, I agree. Still, remember the attempt on your life in the Rue Saint-Nicaise — that dreadful bomb from which you only escaped by a miracle."

"Thanks to you, Josephine! If you hadn't been a little late, that day, in dressing, my carriage would have been blown up. A lucky vanity!"

"Don't speak of that, my dear! Don't recall that terrible scene to my mind. But — I repeat, I can't feel at peace any longer. If you had taken my advice, Bonaparte, you would have accepted the offer of the Royalists. You could easily have restored the dynasty to the throne. The King would have owed you a lifelong gratitude. You could have been whatever you pleased — Grand Constable, a prince — the first peer of the realm, the man to whom everything was due. Ah, why did you repulse the advances of the Bourbons?"

"The Bourbons? Their time is past! They amount to nothing any more! My God — why concern yourself with such things? Women were made for sewing and pleasure, not to interfere in politics."

"No doubt you are right, my dear," said Josephine, meekly, drawing her India shawl over her bare shoulders. "And still, I can't keep myself from thinking that you have chosen unwisely. Where will your ambition lead you? Do you hope to make yourself King?"

The general smiled enigmatically and murmured, in a far-away voice:

"King? No! Kings are out of date. I can do better than that, Josephine!"

"You'll see. Oh, I'm still afraid! Your greed for fame will destroy you yet. Already, to play at being King, you plan to install yourself at St. Cloud. You are surrounding us with a court beside which that of Louis XIV was petty. I won't be still any longer. Soon you'll be bored with me, and will take mistresses openly. You'll play the great lover!"

"Come, my dear, what's the matter with you? How have I deserved this scene you're making?"

The Creole grew bolder; she shook her little head, and her Grecian coiffure shook with it.

"Do you suppose I'm blind, Napoleon? Do you think I don't know of your intrigues with other women? Oh, I won't approach you any more because of Mme. Fourrès, with whom you lived in Egypt —"

"Indeed? I think myself you'll do well to keep still about my conduct at that time!"

"But what of Grassini, that gross mistress you brought back from Italy? How has she been able to hold you so long? You've given her a little house in the Rue Chantierine. I know that! You follow her everywhere."

Bonaparte sat down, with an angry gesture which, striking a Sèvres vase, made it totter dangerously.

"How's this? Do you dare to spy on me?"

"Haven't I the right? But don't worry. You're not the only one who knows the way to her door."

Napoleon mastered his anger with an effort.

"Josephine — will you be sensible? Grassini means nothing to me. I'm interested in her as a singer, not as a woman. You know that I love music."

"And tragedy, too, I suppose!" she said, sarcastically.

"What do you mean?"

"How about all the actresses who come here and go up to your room at night, by the little stairway, almost through my own room! Oh, don't make me repeat their names! You have all these mistresses — and still you find it astonishing that you can't make me a mother! You give me the leavings, what others no longer want! I've given proofs — I have a son and a daughter. How about you?"

Cut to the quick, Bonaparte turned away.

"Josephine — you exaggerate," he said. "Nothing about my behavior justifies such reproaches. How can you be jealous of such creatures — most of them are worthless."

"That makes your conduct all the worse!"

"Can't you understand that they represent amusement — that love isn't involved? You know that you are the only woman I really love."

"You love me for the pleasure I can still give you, but, at bottom, you despise me — as you despise all women!"

"You're wrong to doubt me, Josephine. I'm attached to you for life. Although it's quite true that I will let no woman dominate me!"

"Ah — there's the word — it's the index of your ego-

tism! I'm only a toy, a doll who pleases you! You cling to me because you're used to me."

She had fallen into a chair and sat, weeping, her nerves exhausted. He looked at her sharply. Her tears, carrying away the paint, gradually stripped her cheeks of color. She realized what was happening.

"Go away — don't look at me like that! Oh, I know — I'm old! You don't love me any more. I'm ugly, too. Take other women, then, younger, prettier women. Give them flowers and money — make me the laughing stock of the world!"

Disarmed by her tears, feeling, too, a little guilty, Bonaparte didn't know how to answer, and wanted to escape. But his pity was greater than his annoyance. Kneeling on the carpet, he put his arms, awkwardly, about his wife.

"My little Josephine," he whispered, embarrassed like a man who doesn't know how to comfort a child.

Her tears fell on his hand, and, in spite of himself, they afforded him a strange satisfaction. At last she was jealous. She suffered as she had made him suffer. Well, it was time that his turn came!



From Luxembourg to the Tuileries

INTRIGUES — THE 18TH. BRUMAIRE

INSTALLATION AT THE LUXEMBOURG — JOSEPHINE IS BORED AGAIN
IS BONAPARTE THINKING OF DIVORCE?

SHE MUST BE ON HER GUARD

ONCE the first emotion was past, Josephine, after the panic Bonaparte had inspired in her on his return from Egypt, felt that she had carried things off very well. Napoleon had forgiven her without reproaches; seemed even to have forgotten everything. Such generosity certainly deserved some reward from her. So she became submissive to her husband, and tried to anticipate all his wishes.

As for him, he pursued his great designs, not disposed, seemingly, to confide in his wife. But she was useful to him, if not actually indispensable. Her cleverness, her tact, like that of a great lady of the old aristocracy, had much to do with concealing the boldness of the strokes of a brusque soldier too little trained in the ways of diplomacy.

What did Napoleon want? She wasn't sure. But it was enough for her that he had confessed that he needed her; she was no longer making a counter of her devotion.

In the house in the Rue de la Victoire, at Malmaison,

at Joseph's, at Mortefontaine, she busied herself in check-mating the intrigues of Bernadotte and Moreau, who tried to stand in the path of Bonaparte's ambitions. Without bitterness toward them, she seconded the efforts of Joseph and Lucien to enlist strong allies. At a soirée, during a walk, she could enlist supporters, learn secrets, arrange for private interviews. In a drawing room her charm was useful in winning over those who were in doubt. No one was her match in leading talk away from dangerous channels, and in treating the most delicate topics in a jesting fashion.

Already Gohier had agreed to support Bonaparte. Barras, though regretfully, effaced himself. Fouché, minister of police, was on the general's side; so were Cambacères, minister of justice, and Talleyrand. He was the man of the Council of Elder Statesmen; the majority of the Council Five Hundred was with him; the country, almost to a man, and the whole army, were devoted to him.

The Directory was completely discredited. The treasury was empty. Anarchy reigned in the land. The roads were no longer safe; bands of brigands, known as "chauffeurs," roamed everywhere. The government was in the hands of business men, bankers, merchants; of a faction that had lost all reputation and regarded power simply as a means to satisfy the demands of its mistresses and to crush its rivals. The whole country, tired of this mess, disheartened by what was going on, was ready to hail as a savior a man who would restore peace and order, a chieftain strong enough to buttress the state and assure a normal life to all.

Bonaparte waited the hour with a feline patience. When he felt that it had come he calculated his chances

in cold blood, estimated his power, and, on the 18th. Brumaire, seized the power and took it into his own hands at a stroke.

Immediately after the Coup d'État, Bonaparte installed himself in the Luxembourg. Josephine occupied there the rooms that had once belonged to the Gohiers, on the first floor, while her husband took up his quarters on the ground floor. There she lived the life of a recluse.

Napoleon had exacted only one thing after their reconciliation. She must break with Mme. Tallien, Mme. Hamelin, Mme. Chateaurenaud, and all those pretty creatures of perdition, as he called them. He made an exception in favor of Mme. Récamier; her aversion for men saved her. It seemed to him that she set a good example!

The hour was one for virtue. Cæsar's wife must be above suspicion. The Creole obeyed him; she saw her friends only in secret, and definitely put Charles out of her life and her thoughts. His memory, after all, faded with a surprising rapidity. What importance had the grimaces of Guignol beside the mask of Tragedy?

She had been too badly frightened. She had retrieved a desperate situation by a miracle, and now she meant to be careful. In the space of a few hours she had seen all she had stood to lose because of her frivolity. Now she put safety before everything. At her age one could no longer risk all. The last cards were about to be dealt; she must win the hand.

Moreover, Bonaparte was as generous with his purse as with his forgiveness. He had paid her debts without a word, the bills of her tradesmen as well as the price of Malmaison. Who, placed as Josephine was, wouldn't have been thoughtful? Here were the reasons that made her

yield, without too bad a grace, to her husband's demands.

Yet how dreary the Luxembourg was! But she hoped that things might be different in the Palace of the Tuileries, upon which Bonaparte had his eye. He installed himself there early in 1800, with great ceremony. The ground floor was assigned to Josephine; a small, hidden staircase led to her husband's apartments on the floor above.

But, unhappily, she had no more share in Napoleon's honors at the Tuileries than she had had at the Luxembourg. He put her to one side, so far as his public life was concerned. He was cautious, feeling that his authority was not yet sufficiently established. The Royalists were plotting, and the Jacobins talked only of overthrowing the tyrant of the 18th. Brumaire.

His second Italian campaign and the great victory of Marengo came just in time to stifle the rising flames of revolt under a wave of popular enthusiasm. The conspirators stopped to think. But if the Jacobins seemed ready to abandon the game, the Royalists were resolute, and tried to enlist the support of Josephine, who was, they thought, favorably inclined toward them. Bonaparte had just entrusted to her the task of dealing with the Émigrés, in the hope that her tact would enable her to attach to him a number of useful people of the old régime. So excuses for approaching her were not lacking, and they were used.

The Creole was willing to act as a go-between. Through her Bonaparte received offers of the sword of the Grand Constable, a duchy, wealth, if he would consent to support the return of the Bourbons. Josephine found these proposals attractive, and tried to persuade her husband to accept them. But they angered the Corsican, and he ended the negotiations abruptly.

Now, however, she saw indications that Napoleon wanted to bring her back from the obscurity to which he had relegated her. On the occasion of the marriage of his brother Louis to his step-daughter Hortense, in January, 1802, he arranged great festivals in honor of his family and that of the young bride, in whom he had always been much interested, and whom he loved dearly.

Soon afterward he went to Lyons, taking Josephine with him, and, for the first time since his elevation to the Consulate, she was treated officially as the first lady of the land.

Then, taking the advice of her doctor, Corvisart, who insisted that the coming hot season would make it likely that she might become a mother, Josephine went, early in the summer, to drink the waters of Plombières. But alas, on her return, she became only too sure that the cure had been without effect.

Again she was fearful. Having become consul for life, Napoleon might well want to hand down his office to his descendants. He had no child, but he was in a position to demand either that she give him one or let him divorce her to seek paternity in a new marriage. Many urged him to do just this. Josephine would have given anything to delight him and confound her enemies by becoming pregnant! With a child she would have been safer than as a crowned queen.

She had known for a long time how her sterility was being used against her. Lucien and Joseph had not neglected that weapon, nor had Murat, though she had helped to bring about his recent marriage to Caroline, Napoleon's sister. The plotters had already scored against her, in

June, by securing the downfall of Fouché, who was devoted to her.

Only one hope remained to her. It lay in Bonaparte's adoption, which he had allowed to be rumored as his intention, of Napoleon-Charles, the son of Louis and Hortense, newly born, whose godfather he was.

All the honors he now allowed her to share were not enough to reassure her. She had not enjoyed seeing Bonaparte climb so high. His greed for power frightened her; she could not reconcile herself to the idea that this little Corsican officer was in a fair way to seat himself on a throne.

Nearly forty years old, still beautiful of body, but fading as to her face, and concealing her age only with the help of long and skillful attention to her toilet, and the use of many artifices, she lost courage. Napoleon's love for her was gentler, more reasoned. She now held him only by the power of her mind, and to retain him she could count only on her meekness, her tenderness, and the services she was in a position to render him.

If he fell in love her fate was sure. So she kept her eye on Napoleon's alcove with more anxiety and watchfulness than Napoleon found it necessary to give to his frontiers, where the enemy might appear at any moment.



Mademoiselle George

JOSEPHINE IS DECEIVED — SHE REBELS
AN EXPEDITION IN THE DARK THAT TURNS OUT BADLY
FOR THE CREOLE

JOSEPHINE paid little attention to the chatter of Mme. Remusat, her lady-in-waiting. An unusual nervousness affected her. They were alone in the great drawing room of the Tuileries, hung with yellow silk and furnished in mahogany upholstered in India silk. It was late; the rock crystal chandelier was lighted. Outside a January night covered the windows with its frosty breath. In the fireplace logs burned on bronze andirons.

"Did you know," Mme. Remusat was saying, "that capes are coming in again? And redingotes are fashionable, too, to throw over an evening dress or a ball gown. Only yesterday at the Palais-Royal —"

She stopped short, startled. Josephine had seized her hand:

"You hear?"

"Do I hear what, my dear?"

"It's she! That George! She's going to him! I know her step. She was here only the day before yesterday!"

Mme. Remusat tried to rally Josephine.

"Oh, Madame — why bother about her? This George! A little actress from the Théâtre-Français!"

"How would you like it, in my place?" cried Josephine. "She's been his mistress for a month. It began at Saint-Cloud. I shut my eyes, thinking it was only a passing fancy. But he sees her here—in my own house!"

"Oh, Josephine, I think you're exaggerating your husband's interest in her. You know he's in love with you, and only with you. He told me a few days ago that love was not for men like himself. Politics absorb him. He has no wish for official mistresses."

"If he confided in you it was because he wanted you to repeat what he told you to me. I tell you he adores her—he's mad about her. He's given her a white Cashmere shawl and a large veil of English point lace. He takes an interest in her clothes. That's a bad sign. You see—I'm well informed! Mme. Bernard, our florist, takes roses to her every day. I won't speak of the money he gives her!"

"Madame, be a little calmer, please. You're beside yourself with anger."

"I know what I'm talking about. She loves him. She talks of him all the time. My dressmaker, Mme. Germont, who lives in the same house, in the Rue Saint-Anne, has told me. And she's faithful to him—faithful!"

Outraged, the Creole repeated the word.

"She's only sixteen," Josephine went on, her voice altered. "He must have youth now. I've seen her—she's beautiful, with the beauty of an angel and a fiend."

"Maybe, but she has ugly feet."

"Much he cares! He makes her keep her stockings on. Oh, I detest her! She'll take him away from me! They talk politics together. Bonaparte tells her secrets of state, and amuses himself by asking her advice. She interests him."

Josephine had risen, and greatly excited, walked about, listening.

"Can you hear them laughing, overhead?"

"My dear, you're the victim of your imagination. It's too far away."

With a furious gesture the Creole tore off the organdy fichu that covered her hair.

"No! No! I won't stand it any longer! I can hear their love-making! It's too shameful! To be untrue to me almost under my very eyes! I'm going up, I'll take them by surprise, I'll make a scandal — I'll throw her out! Are you coming?"

Mme. Remusat, terrified, held out her arms to Josephine, who had started toward the door.

"Madame, don't do that! I beg of you! Think of your husband's anger! It would be rash — as for me, I don't know if I should — "

Josephine stared at her lady-in-waiting.

"What?" she said, surprised and hurt. "Claire — won't you stand by me in this trouble?"

Mme. Remusat lowered her head. How could she refuse without seeming ungrateful? She knew only too well how much she owed to the First Consul's wife. Looking at the Creole, she saw that she could not hope to persuade her to give up this plan. She took a lighted faggot from the fire.

"Very well, let's go," she said. "I hope to Heaven you won't be sorry!"

Together the two women, with Josephine in the lead, went through the bedroom, the bathroom and began to climb the stairs. Suddenly a noise at the top of the flight stopped them.

"What's that?" said Josephine, whose determination was weakening.

"Josephine — what are we thinking of? Let's go back, for Heaven's sake! It's Roustam, the Mameluke. He's always on guard at the general's door, with his big sword. He watches like a dog. He knows nobody. He's a terrible man — he's quite capable of killing us."

Josephine grew pale with fright.

"Do you really think so?" she said.

They heard the noise again. At the same moment a gust of air extinguished the torch. They took to their heels in panic. They rushed down the stairs, back to the drawing room, back to the light. There they looked at one another; they were pale and breathless. In Mme. Remusat's eyes there were tears. Josephine's face was lined with anxiety; she looked old, but she was quieter. She laughed, nervously.

"That was a lucky escape!" she said. "It was too stupid, anyway. You were right, Claire — it was a silly idea. Kiss me."

She drew the lady-in-waiting to a seat. Already she was anxious to forget the incident.

"You say that redingotes are going to be fashionable?"

Mme. Remusat looked at her, surprised, admiring her ability to shift from mood to mood so easily.

"Yes, and draped clingingly. It will be divinely becoming to you."



In Belgium

AT PEACE — TRAVEL AND HONORS

JOSEPHINE TAKES ACCOUNT OF WHAT SHE OWES TO NAPOLEON

A LOVE LETTER — BONAPARTE'S REGRETS

BEFORE long Josephine was reassured. Mlle. George's reign had been only a passing one, and Bonaparte came back to her, as usual, tenderer, more affectionate, craving her forgiveness with a humility which showed the Creole how great her power over him still was. Her fears had been idle. Napoleon hadn't the slightest idea of preferring a mistress to her, or seeking a separation. And she guessed, too, that his great plans made her essential to him.

He had made peace with the enemy; at Luneville with the Austrians, at Amiens with the English. Little by little he was uniting the country, conciliating the nobles by adroit advances, and the émigrés by opportune restorations of confiscated estates. His fire, his generosity, his thoughtfulness for the general welfare, had won the hearts of the people.

Josephine felt that the confidence and hope of the whole of France, rising gradually about them, bound them more and more closely together, in glory as well as in love.

She realized that the time for her to oppose her husband's plans had passed. So she had chosen to further them to the limits of her power. Moreover, the part he had assigned to her flattered her. To her fell the delicate task of striking the keynote for a new society, to educate, by her example, the wives of officers and officials, people of obscure birth, raised to the highest place by a sudden stroke of fortune. It was for her to make the French court one not unworthy of comparison with that of the deposed kings, and able to match itself with those of foreign countries.

She was always with Napoleon now; she took part with him in all ceremonies, and went with him upon all official journeys. She accompanied him to Rouen, to Meaux, and, in the autumn of 1802, to Belgium, where Bonaparte created the port of Antwerp — "a pistol aimed at the heart of England."

Wasn't this a fairy tale life that she was living? Everywhere the whole population of cities, headed by the clergy, came to meet them. They crossed provinces with fêtes on all sides, acclaimed, heaped with flowers and gifts, worshiped by artists, musicians and poets, who tuned their lyres to sing their praises.

Worn out, but happy, Josephine undertook her duties with a good grace, as the best way to maintain herself. Often dazzled, she would close her eyes to recover, and to be able to distinguish between dream and reality. Could it be she who was here, the little Creole from Martinique, the girl whom the guillotine had threatened, she, who to keep herself alive, had traded upon her body like a courtesan? It was she, saved from the oblivion to which she had

been drifting by Napoleon's fancy for her, raised up to be beside him!

He always returned to her, whom he had made the most envied woman in France. How far away, now, seemed the time when she had said, condescendingly sarcastic, "How amusing he is, this little Bonaparte!" The times of Hoche, of Barras, of Charles, the little clown!

So, at last, she took stock of what she owed to her husband, and knew that never, no matter how she tried, could she give him a love worthy of him. He had become an all powerful deity for her, from whom one could hope for everything while adoring him, and fear the worst if one disobeyed him.

Between two posts Bonaparte had gone to Antwerp to survey the construction of the port, the building of new wharves, and the construction of the ships that were to carry an innumerable army of Frenchmen to England. He had just left a reception he had consented to attend for the dignitaries of the city, and, alone, his hands behind his back, his coat collar turned up, he looked out to sea. A courier brought him a letter.

"From Josephine? Already?" he said to himself, in surprise. "I left her only eight days ago. What does she want? A favor, I suppose."

He was about to pocket the letter; then changed his mind and opened it.

My 'dear Napoleon:

All my annoyances were dissipated when I read your kind and touching letter, which confirmed your good feeling toward me. How grateful I am that you are still, after

so long a time, interested in your Josephine. If you knew, you would be pleased with yourself for being able so greatly to delight a woman who loves you. A letter is the picture of the heart of him who writes it, and I keep yours beside my heart. I mean to keep it constantly. It will console me in your absence, and be my guide when you are near, for I want to be, always, in your eyes, the good, the tender, Josephine who thinks only of your happiness.

If your heart leaps with joy, if sadness troubles you for a moment, you must bring your happiness and your troubles alike to my breast; you can have no thought I do not share. Behold my desire, my longing, they come to this—to want to do everything to please you and make you happy. Good-by, Bonaparte—I shall not forget the last sentence of your letter. I keep it in my heart, it is engraved upon it. With what transports I reply. Yes, my wish, too, is to please you, to love you—or, rather, to adore you.

He raised his head. Before him the waters of the Scheldt, as cold and dreary as a sea fog, resembled a huge sponge, swollen by the gloomy November sky.

“Is it possible?” he said to himself. “Is it really she who writes so to me?”

He shivered. His eyes filled with tears, and a deep melancholy took possession of him. Slowly he reread the letter.

“Why must it come too late?” he said, overcome.

He was, for a moment, in rebellion against the fate that amuses itself by seeing to it that love shall not be matched at the right time with love. What would he not have given to have received such a letter long ago, on

the eve of Arcola or Rivoli, when, fever ridden, doubting everything, he had been less fearful of attacking the enemy than of questioning the postman who, having stopped at Josephine's, had come from France — perhaps with empty hands!

Fourth Part



THE EMPRESS



The Empress

FITTING — A NOT TOO IMPERIAL GESTURE
MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD — SOMBER PRESENTIMENTS

IN Josephine's room Leroy, the couturier, himself opened his boxes before the Emperor and the Empress. He was very busy, mincing in manner, powdered and painted, his narrow waisted figure laced into his French coat. He laid the coronation garments on the mahogany bed, bowing, with the gestures of a première danseuse. All were there: the mantle, the robe, the slippers, the silk stockings with gold clocks. Then, making a deep obeisance before Josephine:

"If your Majesty will allow me, I will, so that she may see the effect, try on the mantle one last time —"

"No, Leroy — leave us," said Napoleon, curtly.

Leroy disappeared; Napoleon turned toward his wife.

"Empress! If you deign to allow it, I will myself, in these circumstances, have the honor of serving you as valet de chambrel"

The Creole laughed.

"No — rather as magician! He who made of Cinderella the most envied of fairies!"

Astonished, she looked at the bed, at those garments of a dream, as if they could not be for her. Her mind had

not had time to accustom itself to this idea. The next day, the 2nd. of December, the Pope was to crown her as Empress of the French.

Crowned at Napoleon's side! Allowed to share, equally, all the honors they were about to heap upon him. Was this not a dream from which she must awaken soon? Empress—and only a few weeks ago Bonaparte had talked of divorcing her!

That had been at Saint-Cloud. He had the effrontery to receive, before her, in broad daylight, his latest mistress. Josephine had not been able to brook such an insult. In a rage she had stormed into the very room of the lovers, and, surprising them, had caused a disturbance of which the whole castle had known.

Napoleon had been beside himself, and, in his mad rage, worn out by his wife's insupportable jealousy, had decided to demand a divorce. Summoned by the Emperor, Eugene had come post haste to see to his mother's interests. All had seemed lost when the maladroit insistence of Joseph and Lucien and the insolent delight of all the Bonapartes had led the Emperor to pause and reflect.

Josephine took advantage of the respite to make clever use of tears and assume the rôle of a martyr resigned to the sacrifice. Her weakness had saved her. Once more Napoleon, moved to remorse, had forgiven her.

At this moment he seemed to have forgotten that affair. He had taken the white satin robe, stitched with golden bees and trimmed with silver, from the bed, holding up the waist to the light, so that all its tiny diamonds gleamed. Josephine, suddenly as happy as a child, cried out:

"It's marvelous! Do you see, Bonaparte, how right

I was when I went to Leroy? Look at this yellow lace trimming! I tell you only Leroy could have managed the widening of the collar there so well!"

"Josephine," said Napoleon, "let me try on the slippers for you."

She sat down, and held out her slender leg to the Emperor, who, kneeling, tried to insert the little feet into the slippers of white velvet, embroidered in gold. She laughed, and shook in her chair.

"Napoleon — you're killing me! Oh, how awkward you are!"

His hand stole upward, and wandered audaciously under her skirt. . . .

"You rascal!" she cried. "Will you have done? What's the matter with you, all at once?"

But, duly shod, she stood up, while Bonaparte brought, in his arms, the great mantle of purple velvet, adorned with golden bees, trimmed with a double row of ermine, and embroidered with olive branches, laurels and oak leaves. He flung it on her back; she bent under its weight.

"How heavy it is!" she whispered, while he fastened it to her shoulder with a diamond brooch.

"Yes, it is imperial," he said. "But noblesse oblige, my Josephine. You needn't be afraid — they will carry your train. That will be the duty and the honor of my sisters and my sisters-in-law."

"You think they will consent to do it?"

"They must!"

"Listen, Bonaparte — I'm afraid it will humiliate them. You know how proud they are, especially Pauline. Don't you think pages would do as well?"

His voice metallic, with a decisive gesture, the Emperor said, harshly:

"That will do!"

"Very well, my dear," said Josephine, meekly. "And, as a matter of fact, you are right — the procession will look better."

Napoleon had taken from its case, on the mantel, the crown, set with diamonds and emeralds, decorated with wreaths, with eagles with widespread wings, topped by a cross. Gently he placed it on his wife's head, which she lowered to bring her forehead to the level of his hands. The Emperor stepped back, satisfied with his work.

"Josephine — I have made you Empress with my own hands!"

"And with your heart!"

Deeply moved he looked at the stately figure, the majesty of which added to its grace.

"Little Creole," he whispered, approaching her, "are you happy?"

She did not answer. Dreamily she caressed the golden bees embroidered in relief on the mantle.

"Are you not happy?" he insisted. "What are you thinking about? What do you see?"

"These bees, Napoleon. . . . There is a strange story I have never dared to tell you. You would never have believed it. At Trois Ilets, one day, when I was home for my vacation, I disturbed a whole hive of bees in the attic where they had put my playthings. They surrounded me in their flight, they lit on me, they crawled over my clothes, my hands, my face. But not one of them stung me. My dear, wasn't that an omen? Don't you suppose it's the bees

of my childhood that I find again now on this robe and this mantle?"

The Emperor listened, rapt. The story appealed to his superstitious mind, and strengthened the faith he had always had in omens.

"It is symbolic, Josephine. God already meant you for me. It was written that we should reign together. It shall be so. We shall share the task; while I win battles you shall win hearts."

The Creole could not smile. She was beset by a strange sadness. The victory was hers, but she took in it only a joy mingled with unrest and regret. How this Imperial finery bore down upon her shoulders, crushed her under a load of anxiety! The crown, above all, seemed to bear down her head as it were of iron and lead, as if Fate had suddenly laid its hands upon her to hold her a prisoner. . . .



Worries

THE LIFE OF THE EMPRESS

A DEATH WHICH AGAIN MAKES JOSEPHINE'S SITUATION PRECARIOUS

BONAPARTE'S INTRIGUES—A VISIT FROM FOUCHÉ

NAPOLEON DISCLAIMS HIS MINISTERS

PROTESTS AND ACTS OF DEVOTION

THEY certainly seemed to be firmly united for life. How could any one doubt it after the coronation? She had received triple unction from Pope Pius VII, had been crowned by Napoleon's own hands, had driven through Paris in triumph, in a golden chariot, drawn by eight horses, acclaimed by crowd, saluted by cannon fire, heralded by trumpets, escorted by bands and prancing squadrons of cavalry!

There was an assurance that their fates were forever linked in the celebrations, unique in history, shared in by the populace, in the pomp of the more fashionable ceremonies, in the homage and adulation of a whole people, who thought of her as one with the Emperor to whom she was everything.

The nightmare of divorce seemed to be finally dissipated. Bonaparte gave up the idea of handing down his throne to a son of his own. He began to consider very seriously the adoption of little Napoleon-Charles, the son

of Hortense and Louis. He was fond of the youngster, enjoyed his prattle, played soldiers with him. "Hurrah for Nonon the grenadier!" the child cried, waving his arms. The smiles of this baby made Josephine's future seem brighter.

It took all this assurance to enable her to endure the burden of her rôle as Empress. It would have borne down any other woman. Every day there were audiences, receptions, installations, state dinners. She had to play a part constantly, always smiling. She had to be on her guard all the time, careful of what she said, steering talk away from dangerous topics, speaking to every one according to his rank, dealing artfully with flatterers, composing disputes due to wounded vanity, satisfying the ambition of some without making others jealous, attend, to the point of utter weariness, affairs planned ahead of time to the minutest detail.

She understood perfectly that she must do nothing that did not cater to Napoleon's supreme egotism. She no longer belonged to herself, she was only an automaton the mission of which was to contribute to the popularity and fame of the Emperor, a master who would permit no self-indulgence.

When he was away from Paris he had her watched by his chief of police. If she relaxed in the observance of etiquette, if she allowed herself any interlude, went to some small theater, sitting in a grilled box, a rather curt letter reminded her of the conventions and of the consideration due from her to her own rank.

She yielded, of necessity to this regimen. The gilded cage in which she dwelt was an evidence of her strength, a symbol of her estate. She made a point of being always

punctual, in good humor, obedient to her lord and master. She forced herself to play her part, to do more and more for him, and so to make herself indispensable to him.

Often she sighed, remembering the easy life in the Rue de Chantereine, when she had been free to pursue her whims and fancies, or the happy days at Malmaison when Charles had made love to her by moonlight, with the verve of an infatuated Pierrot—who had not even waited for her candle to go out before visiting her room. Malmaison! It was there, only, now, that she could really be herself, in a setting that suited her tastes and her ambitions.

But she could spend only fleeting moments there. Since becoming Empress she had lived a breathless life, full of constant activity, attached to the Emperor's train. He was always leaving Paris for Saint-Cloud, Fontainebleau or Rambouillet, or to throw himself, at the head of his armies, against the heart of Europe.

This life stifled her; it troubled her to only be able to follow his victories from afar. At Ulm she heard of Austerlitz; the news of Jena and Eylau came to her at Mayence. She drank the waters at Aix and Plombières; she traveled through France, Italy, Belgium and Germany, always on the move, always hurrying along the roads, whether it rained or was fine, through mud and dust.

Her household followed her, liveried men-servants, ladies in ordinary and ladies in waiting, chamberlains, stewards—not forgetting her dogs. In cities garrisons presented arms when she arrived, guns sounded their salutes. In every department, every community, she entered, prefects, mayors, dignitaries, the clergy, in full canonicals, came to welcome her. She had to listen to addresses, ac-

cept flowers, smile, make reply, find the right word, always, that would reach their hearts, make presents, take advantage of a few minutes to rally the discontented and the indifferent to the Emperor's cause, disarm those who were bitter, leave behind her the memory of a radiant and kindly fairy.

At night, after twelve hours on the road, she would arrive at the end of a stage. As an ambassadress, an exponent of French taste, she had to change her whole costume, have her hair done again, receive the authorities, appear at a banquet and a ball, make a brave showing before all these strangers, and smile always, though her head might be splitting—and then go to bed at last exhausted, facing the terrible prospect of going through it all again the next day!

Yet, while Napoleon was with her, she undertook these tasks with a good grace. But she suffered, now, when she was separated from him. It was her turn to be unwilling to leave him, to beg him to take her with him wherever he went, to be afraid of all his absences. She went with him as far as she could, and waited anxiously for a word from him to hasten to rejoin him. She was ready to live with him in camp, to run all the risks of active service, so long as she could maintain her influence over him.

But, as for him, he grew less and less disposed to send for her. In 1807, for instance, at Warsaw, he was seized with a sudden passion for Mme. Walewska, a young Pole, and prolonged his stay there to an alarming length.

How his appearance had changed! He was growing stout. His increasing stature, giving him something of the majestic appearance of a Roman emperor, seemed also

to have accentuated his contempt for all women. He became more autocratic and egotistic from day to day. He was often cold to her, scolded her in speech or in his letters, and then, overcome by a return of his middle-class fondness for her, would seek her out again, as if he found happiness once more, after a tiring day, in slippers and dressing gown.

Josephine realized that habit, rather than love, now attached him to her, and that it was less the woman than the Empress in her that he appreciated. This discouraged her. Was it impossible to be an Empress and happy in one's home life at the same time?

Still, all this was not very serious, and did not, as yet, in any way threaten her position. When one has passed forty good sense and a certain indulgence ought to take the place of love.

But, unexpectedly, fate dealt her a terrible blow. Early in May, 1807, little Charles-Napoleon died of croup at Haye. This news dismayed her. Aside from the grief it caused her, she contemplated this child's death with dread of its consequences. It spoiled Bonaparte's plan for an adoption, and the succession to the throne of France was in the air again.

Already Joseph, Lucien and Jerome had greedy eyes for the Imperial succession. How could Napoleon call check to the greed of this horde of his relatives? Only one way was open to him: divorce, followed by remarriage and the birth of an heir, assuring the direct handing down of his dominion.

He knew, now, beyond all doubt, that he was capable of having children, since, a few months earlier, one of his

mistresses, Eleanor Denuelle, had borne him a son. His self-confidence was restored, while Josephine had lost all hope of becoming a mother through his efforts.

Her age and her temperament had made her sterile. She had sought rejuvenation in vain through the springs at Plombières and Aix; she had had recourse, just as vainly, to charlatans, and sorcerers. The hermits who attracted pilgrims to shrines where miracles were worked had told her, when she consulted them, pleaded with them, of mystic practices which she had tried without success.

So, the threat of divorce, which she had put off hitherto by prodigies of cleverness, gathered once more about her head. She had feared it ever since the beginning of his Consulate. So many people would profit by it, and worked for it; the Bonapartes, the ministers, the envoys of foreign powers. And she knew, too, how doubtful was the validity of the hasty civil marriage ceremony, without a religious validation, which bound her to Napoleon. So, artfully and tenaciously, pretending to the Pope that she feared to go to hell, and assuming a Christian meekness, she had succeeded in strengthening her position by a religious ceremony, to which consecration and coronation, moreover, had seemed to give an indestructible character.

But would her marriage stand against reasons of State? Josephine realized, terrified, that the struggle was about to break out again. The hostility of Napoleon's sisters toward her was apparent on all occasions. Elisa's treachery was heightened against her, while Pauline's insolence increased daily. Lucien and Joseph worked admirably together in support of the intrigues of Murat and Caroline, and Fouché, at the heart of all, was like a spider in its web.

The Creole knew that her enemies were numerous, pitiless, unscrupulous; that they were sure of being able to get around Napoleon. She was alone, with no one upon whom she could really depend, and she knew, and trembled at her knowledge, that the coming blow might fall so swiftly as to give her no time to defend herself.

With horns sounding, amid fanfares, the Imperial train returned from the hunt to the castle of Fontainebleau. The great courtyard was full of vehicles drawn by blooded horses, horsemen in hunting garb, women riders dressed in the colors of their suites. The air was full of the neighing of horses, the barking of hounds, the shouts of huntsmen and whips.

Tired after five hours on horseback, Josephine dismounted. She was radiant in her full riding habit of lilac velvet, embroidered in gold, and she managed to move gracefully toward her rooms. Fouché, who seemed to be waiting for her at the head of the stairs, advanced to meet her, and bent his thin body in a deep bow.

"Good morning, Fouché," said the Empress. "You didn't hunt—you were lucky!"

"Does your Majesty forget that I am Minister of Police, and must watch night and day to insure the safety of your life and the Emperor's? But I hope your Majesty had good sport. Did the beast put up a fitting battle?"

"Don't talk to me about it! We started an unfortunate stag in Franchard's woods. I didn't want to be present at that massacre. It's terrible, the way all these people and dogs fling themselves on a poor animal! I loathe hunting. I wouldn't take part if Napoleon didn't insist."

"The Emperor enjoyed it?"

"I don't know. We lost him at the start. He likes to ride as he pleases. But he seemed preoccupied, to me."

"He is, as a matter of fact."

"Bad news from abroad? Is war in prospect again?"

"Not at all! Your Majesty may be reassured as to that."

Taking Josephine aside, into the recess of a window, Fouché went on, in a low voice.

"The Emperor," he said, "hasn't yet recovered from his grief over the death of the little Prince Napoleon. He talks to me about that every day."

"The child was dear to us," sighed Josephine.

"He built great hopes upon him. He looked upon him as heir to the throne. With the loss of an heir, the future of France worries him. He asks himself, anxiously, what will become of the Empire when he is gone. Already he sees his work destroyed, with Lucien, Joseph, Murat and the rest struggling among themselves for the throne to the serious detriment of the country."

The Creole pricked up her ears; these confidences, and Fouché's sudden intimacy with her, astonished her.

"It's to be feared, I know—but what can I do about it?"

"Everything, Madame."

Josephine grew flushed. She saw what the minister was leading up to. Wouldn't it be well to break off this conversation? But why, by what right, did Fouché talk so to her? Here was a question it was important to have answered at once.

"I don't understand you, Fouché," she said.

He looked at her, with eyes as keen as swords. Under his creased forehead the skin of his cheeks was wrinkled.

"Madame," he said, "forgive me for reminding you of unpleasant things. But—you know that the Emperor has learned beyond all doubt that he can have children."

"I know," said Josephine. "Mme. Denuelle has borne him a son."

"And ever since he has thought only of having another—and this time a legitimate one. A son of his own blood, who could succeed to his throne. In that there would be such safety for him and for France—such joy, as well! And you love him, Madame—you love him enough to do this for him—to allow it to come to him through another woman. . . ."

Josephine grew paler at each word which struck a blow at her very heart. She looked at the policeman with grief and anger, trying in vain to make him look her in the eye.

"Fouché—do you dare to speak so to me? You were my friend! I have supported you against Lucien, against Joseph Bonaparte! But why do you tell me this? Are you charged with the duty of telling me that Napoleon is ready to divorce me?"

"Ready? No! But I must tell you that he is thinking of it. Last July, at Tilsit, the Tsar of Russia offered him a Grand Duchess."

"That's not true! I would have heard of it—"

"He has even caused a list of all the European princesses of marriageable age to be prepared. There are two Russians, two Austrians, a Bavarian. . . ."

"Enough! Enough! I forbid you to go on!"

"He has even sent for their pictures. Ah, Madame, if I could allow myself to give you advice I would beg you not to wait until your hand was forced. I would urge

you to make a great and generous gesture — you would gain by it in the end. History would credit you with having consolidated the Empire and assured the Emperor's happiness, and would render tribute to the nobility of your self-sacrifice."

Josephine was white; she felt that she was suffocating. She tore her velvet toque from her head, with its white feathers, and, plucking it with her hands, sobbed:

"I am to efface myself — disappear? I am to be the plaything of conspirators like you? Don't count on that! And who has given you leave to speak to me in this fashion? The Emperor would never have allowed you to do so. I shall complain to him, and at once. If it costs you dear, you have no one to thank but yourself."

She turned her back upon him, and, feverishly, not waiting to change her dress, she hurried toward the Emperor's office. But he was in conference with his ministers, and had had the door locked. Until evening, racked by anxiety and impatience, she sought in vain for a chance to speak to him in private. He was always surrounded. Fouché was careful never to leave them alone. Night came. Must an understanding with him be put off until next day? Unable to stand it any longer, she called Mme. de Remusat.

"Find the Emperor before he goes to bed," she said, "and tell him I must see him — it is urgent that I speak to him."

It was one o'clock in the morning; she was ready for the night, but she knew that she could not sleep in the bed on which she had thrown herself. The door opened suddenly; she rose. It was Napoleon.

"Mme. de Remusat tells me you are ill, Josephine. What's the matter with you?"

She rushed toward him, and threw herself on his breast, sobbing.

"Oh, Bonaparte — is it possible? Tell me it isn't true! Tell me Fouché has lied! Tell me you don't mean to send me away!"

"What do you mean?"

"That spy came to me this afternoon, saying he spoke in your behalf, to tell me that you had decided to divorce me, that I must consent, that the safety of France required it!"

"Fouché! Oh, this is too much! I gave him no such orders!"

She breathed again; Napoleon's surprise was not feigned.

"Your ministers are more insolent to me every day. They know that you no longer love me well enough to protect me. Oh, Bonaparte, if you mean to cast me off, don't expect me to go willingly! If you command, I will obey — I can't do anything else. But I can't promise to throw away my heart! No, no — I love you too much! It would be too frightful! You don't want to kill your Josephine?"

The Emperor was moved, as well as flattered, by her tears and her despair. And he was suddenly furious at the man who was responsible.

"Fouché? How dare he meddle? Are our intimate relations any business of his? It's disgusting! I shall rate him soundly; I promise you he will regret this!"

Seating himself beside Josephine on the bed, he went on, stroking the bare arm she had put about him.

"Calm yourself, little Creole! Fouché will pay dearly for his insolence. And, above all, be certain that if ever circumstances I don't now anticipate, that seem most unlikely to occur, force me to consider a separation, you shall hear the news from me. I swear it."

"Oh, Napoleon — you lack the courage to confess that you have so much as thought of the possibility of a divorce! I know it very well. I amount to nothing. It's a child you're thinking of. If Fourès had borne you one in Egypt you would have repudiated me long ago!"

"What are you driving at?"

"I haven't been able to give you an heir, but it's not my fault. I know, too, that I have been wasteful of money, that I am in debt. But haven't I always obeyed your orders, haven't I done everything in my power to serve you?"

"I have never had cause to do anything but praise you, my Josephine. I will go farther, and confess that it would be hard for me to see another woman in your place. An Empress unused to the usages of the court, unable to make herself loved, would do me more harm than good. I needn't repeat all this to you, I have given you enough proofs of my sincerity, you know that I can't live without you —"

His words brought to Josephine's heart the relief of a newborn hope. But she wanted a more complete victory. She embraced Napoleon passionately. Already he was weakening, fired with desire for the body of which he had thought himself weary, the perfume, the grace, the suppleness of which reawoke in him a sudden longing for the kisses in which all the joy of his youth had been found. He let his hand steal under her linen nightgown, and deliberately took a breast in his grasp.

"Well, well," he said, jestingly, "they are splendid, the little rascals!"

"I love you," she whispered, drawing him down.

She kissed him; then, without letting him go, she slipped beneath him with a cunning movement of her thighs, and was only reassured when she heard him sighing with pleasure and murmuring childish and passionate words which bore witness to his delight and the power she still held over him. . . .



The Divorce

ALL HOPE SEEMS TO BE LOST — JOSEPHINE'S ANXIOUS LIFE
BONAPARTE SEEMS TO HAVE MADE UP HIS MIND — DEFECTIONS
AN EVENING AT THE TUILERIES — THE IMPERIAL DECISION
TEARS, REPROACHES, SWOONS

NOVEMBER, 1809. Josephine and the Emperor were at Fontainebleau again. A bitter wind was stripping the forest of its last leaves. The sadness of the autumn sky bore heavily upon the heart of the Creole, in which the last rays of hope were being extinguished.

Two years had passed since Fouché's visit. After that her life as Empress had seemed to resume its normal course. But the harbingers of the rising storm had definitely ended her peace.

Too many interests were at stake to make it possible for Napoleon to avoid divorcing her. She fluttered in the cage which, gradually, she saw closing about her. For two years she had been obliged constantly to be on her guard against traps, to live among traitors, to walk always in a path in which, at any moment, a chasm might spread wide open before her. She had known that the slightest mistake might ruin her, and that she was at the mercy of the Emperor.

Sometimes it seemed to her that pride, as much as

pity, led Bonaparte to defer her repudiation. As Empress she was only his creature. Wasn't it he who had made her what she was, the most fortunate of women? Didn't she owe everything to him? He could destroy her with a wave of his hand. That thought flattered his imperial pride, and seemed to him to extend the limits of his power. She was his chattel, his property; he owned her like an animal that he was free to dispose of when he pleased.

More than once she had thought that all was lost. But, on the point of uttering the decisive words, he had returned to her with tears and promises, in fits of nervousness in which she found it hard to distinguish between acting and sincerity. He seemed to be unable to give her up. On the point of a rupture, he recoiled, held back by his memories, by the attraction she still had for him, in spite of her age and her loss of beauty, through the perfection with which she adapted herself to his pleasure — she the expert lover who was so ingenious in pleasing him, that she might prolong her reign a little.

Coldness and a new access of passion, dread and respite, succeeded one another, but always the time when Napoleon's resolution would be strengthened enough to bring all to an end approached. Josephine realized, with dreadful anxiety, that she was losing a little ground each day, which her foes occupied with a frantic delight.

She had just spent two months at Strasbourg and one at Plombières, where she had vainly hoped that Napoleon, who had been beaten at Essling and had then been victorious at Wagram, would consent to send for her. But he seemed to have forgotten her, for at Schoenbrunn he devoted himself solely to Mme. Walewska, who was about to bear him a child. He wrote her only short letters, with-

out tenderness, written in haste, the dryness of which was even harder for her to bear than his silence.

What had become of the mood in which, during the campaign of 1805 he had written to her, from Ulm and Austerlitz, letters, less passionate than those from Italy, to be sure, but in which he still said to her:

My Josephine, my dear Josephine, I love you. I embrace you, I am eager to see you. You must be cheerful, you must amuse yourself, in the hope that before the end of the month we shall see one another again. . . .

How far away, already, seemed the voyage to Bayonne she had taken with him the year before! For four months they had been together, staying at the castle of Marac, near the sea, where Napoleon's love had been rekindled like a dying fire! Bitterly she evoked the memory of their games on the beach, the loverlike attentions with which he had surrounded her, above all the memory of certain voluptuous nights, like fruit of a surpassing sweetness — they were like precious things irretrievably lost!

And now, when she had only just returned to Fontainebleau, a new blow had fallen. The door in her room that gave access to Napoleon's was walled up. Once more there was a barrier between them, and this time it seemed insurmountable.

She was ready to make any concession provided that she might still be Empress. She had decided no longer to object to Napoleon's mistresses, to economize, to stop incurring more debts with that disarming serenity that had always characterized her conduct of her financial affairs. She struggled for life like a drowning woman. What

would become of her if she let herself be cast down from the throne to which she had risen with so much effort?

Each day, now, increased the agony in her heart. She felt that all around her were either indifferent or malevolently hostile. Everything conspired to show her the ingratitude of those upon whom she had heaped her favors, who, now, turned away from her, like rats deserting a sinking ship. Even her son Eugene, whom she called to her to help her, had advised her to be resigned!

And yet, with this constant anxiety gnawing at her bosom, she had to dress herself, appear in public, repress her tears, smile, chat, move at her ease among women who marked all her defeats and were ready to rejoice at her downfall. Oh, the struggle called for more strength than she had! Sometimes, at night, exhausted, her head buried in the pillows, she wept, already resigned to her fate.

"I'm suffering too much! No—I can't bear it any longer! I give up—let him get rid of me as soon as he pleases—only let there be an end to all this!"

They had dined, according to their habit, alone together in the dining room at the Tuileries. Throughout the meal, which scarcely lasted a quarter of an hour, they had not exchanged a word. Josephine had eaten nothing, she had been too busy keeping back her tears. Napoleon seemed nervous. With a forced enjoyment, he had complimented the service several times. Having drunk a bottle of Chambertin, he had called for another, something he never did, and had swallowed two more glasses of the wine.

They went, still silent, to the drawing room. A page

brought coffee to them there. As usual, Josephine filled a cup and offered it to the Emperor.

"Leave us alone!" said Napoleon, curtly.

The page removed himself. Bonaparte, the veins of his forehead swollen, was busy stirring his coffee to melt the sugar, a task so important that it seemed to demand all his attention. Suddenly, without having tasted his coffee, he put his cup down on a mahogany stand.

"Josephine!" he said.

She started, and looked at him. He had pronounced her name in a harsh, strange voice, as if a hand were at his throat.

"My dear," he went on, with an effort, "I must talk to you of grave matters."

The Creole, her knees shaking, her mouth dry, sank into a chair. She passed her hand before her face, like a child trying to stifle a sob. And, one by one, words to which there was no answer fell upon her ears, like blows that were breaking her limbs.

"Josephine," he went on, "you must forgive me for what I am about to do to you. I must. My dear, it is a terrible thing that it should be I who tells you this, but I made you a promise. Josephine—it is decided—yes, it is decided. We must be divorced."

He stopped as he said the word. She looked at him in horror, wishing she need not believe what she heard. What? Was it the mouth that had begged her to marry him, the lips, that maddened in their embraces, had poured out to her so many entreaties and promises, that spoke thus?

"Yes—" His voice was labored. "You must agree to it, my Josephine. I demand this of you as the greatest proof

of devotion that you can give to me—to me and to France.”

Little by little his voice grew firmer. He strode about the room, his hands clasped behind his back.

“You know it well—too many covetous people swarm about my throne. My family, in its greed, seems to have become utterly unscrupulous. Plots are being fostered. My ministers let themselves be bribed by foreign nations. They are already negotiating about the succession. Why shouldn’t they, once everything was arranged, try to bring about the consummation a little sooner? It can’t go on. Josephine, we must separate! I shall remarry at once, to establish a dynasty.”

“Bonaparte!” cried the Empress. “That is what Fouché told me!”

“Do you understand? Because of your sacrifice, the future of France will become bright again—thanks to you!”

The Creole rose, with dignity.

“You are the stronger, Sire. I can only yield to your decision. Do as you please with me, I will obey you.”

She showed, now, as much resignation as rebellion.

“My dearest,” said the Emperor, “I beg you to forgive me for hurting you! If you knew how my heart had rebelled! I would not—I yielded—I changed my mind again. I wouldn’t want any one to live through the nights in which every wish of my heart was in conflict with the interests of France.”

“Tell me your intentions, Sire, and don’t concern yourself any more with me,” said the Creole, coldly. “But—be sure that divorce will bring you no happiness.”

"What? What do you mean?" he cried, turning pale, seized by superstitious fears.

"Wasn't I the one who brought you good luck? Remember your campaigns: Arcola, Rivoli, Austerlitz! You might have been killed a hundred times."

"Be still!"

"And do you remember the attack upon you in the Rue Saint-Nicaise? Didn't I save your life that day? Didn't all go well for you as long as you loved me? You became Emperor —"

"Josephine, I beg you —" he said, frightened as he heard her say aloud things he had not dared to admit to himself.

"And what will they think of you? The people? Your officers? The clergy? Oh, I know! I am old. You are tired of me. You must have a young woman. But there are still those who find me to their taste."

"That prince of Mecklenburg? What do you expect? Oh, I'll take care of him! Josephine—don't wring my heart! Understand what I expect of you. France is isolated a little more each day. Alliances are forming against her. The time will come when I cannot oppose them. I must make alliances that are to be had only through my marriage. I beg you, my best of friends, to agree to efface yourself! I don't ask it for myself, but in the name of France."

Josephine's mournful laughter filled the room.

"And do you believe, Sire, that if you become the brother-in-law of the Tsar or the son-in-law of the Kaiser Francis II, Russia and Austria will cease making war on you? They want to entrap you. They count on your goodness, your innocence. Face the truth—for them you will

never be anything but the little Corsican, the usurper!"

Wounded in his pride, Napoleon made an angry gesture.

"Josephine—be calm! Think of what you're saying. Your grief makes you distracted—"

"You cast me off, Sire—am I not to have the right to complain? What a disgrace—to be dismissed like a servant! Oh, what is to become of me?"

"Have no alarm as to that, my Josephine. You will lose none of the honors that are your due. You will still be Empress. I have insisted on that. You will continue to be my dearest friend. You shall have first place in my heart."

"And my children?"

"I will insure their future. Don't be afraid. Eugene will succeed me on the throne of Italy. I will do everything in my power for you."

"These are only words! Ah, Napoleon, can it be you who speak so to me? Don't you remember all your promises, everything you have written to me? You were lying, then, when you said you would always love me. But you have never loved any one but yourself."

She hid her face in her hands and burst into tears. He could see only her heaving breast, her shoulders shaken by her sobs. Overcome, he knelt before her, put his arms about his wife, and kissed her dress. Mingling his tears with hers he cried out:

"Don't weep, Josephine! Spare me! I am suffering as much as you. More—perhaps more, for I know what I am doing to you! Forgive me—I am so unhappy—tell me you forgive me."

He felt the Empress's body stiffening against his, as

if she had been revived by an evil strength that gave her new life. Suddenly Josephine put her hands on his shoulders, and, frightened, stared at him for a moment.

"It's too much, it's too much, Napoleon. You, whom I have loved so dearly, to be the one to torture me so!"

Her eyelids fluttered, her pupils were dilated, her body collapsed, and she slipped from the chair to the floor. A terrible thought came to the Emperor—suppose she died as a result of the blow he had dealt her!

"Josephine!" he panted. "Josephine!"

Pale as death in her white satin dress, embroidered with gold spangles, she lay stretched out on the carpet; a long lock of hair, falling loose, cast an ominous shadow on her neck.

Bonaparte took her hand, and, letting it fall, sprang back; she was cold. Frightened he hurried to the door and opened it.

"Beausset!" he called. "Come—come quickly!"

The chamberlain hurried into the room.

"Beausset, my wife has had a sudden attack. Can you carry her down to her room? I will light the way for you. Then run to Dr. Corvisart, tell him to come at once to attend to her. At once, I say! Then you can tell Queen Hortense."

Beausset, kneeling on one knee, tried to lift the Empress. But, fat and awkward, he stumbled over his sword.

"You can't manage alone, Beausset," said Napoleon. "I will help you."

And, having given the torch he held to a secretary, he seized Josephine's legs. The strange procession descended the dark and narrow stairs. The chamberlain brushed against the walls, stumbled at each step, and,

afraid of letting his burden fall, clung to it, his forehead perspiring, with all his strength. Suddenly he trembled; a dry voice, but clear, for all its weakness, sounded in his ear:

“Not so violent, Beausset! You’re smothering me!”



Repudiated

JOSEPHINE ACCOMMODATES HERSELF TO HER NEW LIFE

LIFE AT MALMAISON — NAVARRE

A JOURNEY TO AIX AND SWITZERLAND

BIRTH OF THE KING OF ROME

RESULTS OF THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN — THE EMPIRE TOTTERS

THE INVASION OF 1814 — NAPOLEON VANQUISHED

JOSEPHINE'S ANXIETY — ALL IS ARRANGED

SHE had been forced to accept the inevitable. This time tears and ruses had availed her not at all. While waiting for the pronouncement of the official decree of divorce, she had lived through unhappy days at court. Saddest of all was that ceremony in which, before the whole Imperial family, her children, the chief officials and dignitaries of the state, she had been compelled to announce that she was relinquishing her throne of her own free will!

After that had come her exile, her departure for Malmaison. Ah, it still struck a chill to her heart when she remembered that flight, in a gilded carriage, under an icy December rain, pursued by the hoofbeats of the escort in a journey like a nightmare; worst of all was to recall her arrival at Malmaison, where everything reminded her of the Emperor, her recent downfall, the humiliations and misfortunes she had just experienced.

But that had not lasted long. Malmaison had soon repaid her in consolation for the care she had lavished upon it. She grew used to her new estate, and played her part, the more because Napoleon seemed determined to keep his promises to her. She even found, at times, that she felt a profound relief. At last! Her heart had nothing more to fear. It was done with struggles, with relying on false hopes, with distilling within itself the poison of jealousy.

With a clear mind she went over her situation. She retained her title of Empress, her privileges, her home. The honors to be rendered to her were unchanged. To the two millions to be paid to her by the Treasury were added gifts from the Civil List due to Napoleon's liberality. To provide for her visits to Paris he had given her, fully furnished, the Elysée palace, and, at the very gates of the capital, Malmaison, with all its lands. Finally, he had paid her debts.

She had succeeded in avoiding exile to Italy, where her son was living. She was to stay in France, better still, in Paris, or near the city. She couldn't live away from all her friends, her tradespeople, above all, her dressmaker!

So long as matters were so arranged, she was prepared to make the best of things. Little as any one expected it, she would be gracious to the new Empress. She would be her friend, her adviser in case of need. She, who had given delight to so many lovers, thought it was high time for two women to look to the happiness of a single man. Napoleon deserved that much. Indeed, if he wished, occasionally, to revisit her, he could be sure that he would not find her cruel.

But Bonaparte seemed no longer to remember that

she was a woman, and a woman who had, a few months earlier, still been able to afford him the most voluptuous pleasure. He did come to see her at Malmaison, but his visits were formal ones. His tact was perfect, he was full of delicate attentions, but he seemed to have banished love from their relations.

No matter! The Empress had something else, now, to occupy her mind. She had to manage Malmaison, to enlarge it, to redecorate it within, that this house might really be worthy of her new estate. A Creole, she still retained her love of variety, of mixed assemblies, of surrounding herself with animals and flowers. She lavished care on her rose garden, enriched her botanical collections constantly, plowed up the park to increase its fertility and built dams to make waterfalls in the neighboring streams.

She lived in a menagerie; dogs, parrots, black swans, gazelles, kangaroos, ostriches, and monkeys. . . . Monkeys above all, from orang-outangs to striped monkeys, all amusing, well cared for and equally shameless. Mme. d'Arberg, her maid of honor, was scandalized, and tried to have the monkeys banished. But Josephine took their part and excused their solitary pleasures.

"Let these worthy beasts alone, my dear," she said. "Don't they set us a good example?"

She had always respected love, no matter in what form it manifested itself.

But botany, zoölogy, landscape gardening, could only be passing fads for Josephine. Her stay at Malmaison became monotonous. Paris was so near, and there she had so fine a palace! Couldn't she enjoy them? But the Emperor's permission was required. She set about obtaining

it, and he finally consented. She hurried to install herself at the Elysée, believing that the time of fêtes and honors was about to come again for her.

She was soon disillusioned. She felt herself in quarantine. Napoleon was busy. He amused himself without her, negotiating his marriage to Marie-Louise, and preparing, to enhance the splendor of this union, festivals the sight of which could only be odious to the cast-off Empress. Josephine felt that she was not wanted. Napoleon, indirectly, let her know as much. He made her a present of an estate near Evreux, called Navarre, which he raised into a duchy, and invited her to go and take possession of it.

She went there early in April. In its park, surrounded by farms and woods, Navarre was a great fortress, uncomfortable and stark. In its rooms a chilly dampness prevailed; the chimneys smoked. Navarre was gloomy. For Josephine this was exile, in all its severity. Gradually all the people of her household deserted her.

But, happily, better times were ahead. The Emperor gave her permission to go where she pleased — except to Paris. She went to take the cure at Aix, then to Switzerland, stopping at Geneva, bought a house at Pregny, and, agreeably, accepted all the invitations she received. Napoleon would have been glad to see her prolonging her absence, spending the winter in Italy. But she was not satisfied to do that and managed so well that in November she succeeded in getting back to Malmaison.

Well pleased, she learned that Marie-Louise was haughty, cold, that she didn't understand how to conciliate even her well wishers, and that she, Josephine, was being missed! This made up for the Emperor's lack of

tact, for he, now, spoke to her of the new Empress on all occasions, wrote to her in his letters of the heir he expected Marie-Louise to give him soon, and of everything likely to intensify her regret and make her feel her inferior position the more keenly.

But Napoleon was the master. He meant to cater to the susceptibilities of the Austrian, whose interesting condition accentuated her jealousy. Malmaison was too near; Josephine must go away. She went back to Navarre. The castle, restored, after a fashion, was almost habitable. Josephine kept a large court there, but one the etiquette of which was not strict. Her life there was, at least, regular. Lazy mornings, long and careful attention to her appearance, well served meals, music, games, walks, succeeded in filling the empty days. Visits from Eugene and Hortense provided some diversion.

Josephine grew a little stout. Her health had never been so good. She took an interest in love, too, and in the liaisons of those about her. She shut her eyes to them complacently; even furthered them, at need, provided there was no open scandal. To live in the atmosphere of love would cheer her up, stimulate her body, still young and ready to partake discreetly of such pleasure as might offer itself.

The birth of the King of Rome ended Josephine's exile. She was free to go back to Malmaison. She resumed her regular habits there, enjoyed the prattle of her grandchildren, among whom Hortense's second boy, the little "Yes-Yes" was her favorite—for the cards foretold, and they never lied, that one day he would reign over France.

She regained her plants and her animals—above all

she could breathe, from afar, the very air of Paris. There was nothing like that to fill her with the fever of extravagance. She bought clothes, jewels, perfumes, rare flowers, pictures. She arranged marriages, and provided dowries with an Imperial generosity, was the fairy-godmother at many christenings, heaped presents upon all who paid court to her. Money was poured out, her debts mounted. What difference did that make? A few tears, such as she knew so well how to use, would make up her deficit!

Then the taste for travel returned. In July, 1812, she went to Italy, stayed several weeks at Milan, near her grandchildren. Thence she went back to Aix, then to Geneva and Pregny. At the end of autumn she was on her way back to Malmaison.

The future was full of promise except for the indications that the Empire was tottering on its base. From Russia came bulletins that showed that this new campaign was about to end in defeat. Gradually, little by little, the measure of the disaster became plain. The eastern roads saw the return of more wounded and crippled men than of effectives. The Grand Army had been annihilated! Alarming rumors were current. The people, tired of war, were murmuring. They had lost faith in their idol. In a few months Napoleon was to be forced to evacuate Spain.

Josephine was afraid. She was more and more assured that her fate was bound up with that of Napoleon, and that for her everything depended upon the maintenance of the Empire. She followed, with the utmost anxiety, the march of the events that now followed one another with disastrous speed.

On all sides, in Europe, the princes and the kings reared up their heads and gained new confidence and

boldness. They knew that France was shaken. Napoleon had been defeated. He was no longer the god of war, but a soldier as vulnerable as all the rest.

Once more the Prussians, the Austrians and the Russians were allied against him. He collected his last levies, attacked his enemies, but, after some successes, was routed at Leipzig. He returned to France, and, in despairing rage, unable to believe that victory could desert him, rallied his forces to defend his capital. But his enemies were too numerous. He was overwhelmed by superior force. At the end of March Cossacks, with their long spears and their rope whips, were at the gates of Paris.

Panic-stricken, Josephine thought only of flight. But where could she go, in this total rout? She had a single refuge: Navarre! She fled to it, abandoning Malmaison, as she thought, to the rage of the hostile armies. Day followed day, heavy with mortal dread for her, marked by bulletins that exploded like bombs. Napoleon had abdicated on the 6th. of April; on the 11th. he signed the Treaty of Fontainebleau, which solemnly confirmed his dethronement.

Josephine believed she had sounded the depths of unhappiness. The taste of the despair she had known, long ago, in the Carmelite prison, was in her mouth again. But, suddenly, there came good news. By the orders of Alexander, the Russian Tsar, Malmaison had been spared. Better still, the allied princes invited Josephine to return to her home.

At once Josephine regained her courage. And, the worst danger past, ambition was renewed in her. One thing, above all, however, worried her: What fate would the Bourbons reserve for her? She was the Empress, a

crowned queen — she hoped they would remember that! She would not let herself be dispossessed without tears and anger.

Meanwhile, she returned to Malmaison. All the princes, English, Prussian, Russian, hurried to pay her their respects. The most attentive of all was Alexander, who haunted the house with an assiduity which, her pride flattered by it, she attributed less to political considerations than to her own charms.

And here was new cause for rejoicing! The Bourbons did not seem ill disposed toward her. Far from it. They seemed anxious to befriend her and her children, glad, indeed, to take advantage of an opportunity to treat with generosity the wife Napoleon had discarded.

Josephine began to feel solid earth under her feet again. She understood that she had lost nothing, and that the game was in her own hands. She must play her cards well to gain the most that the situation might afford, to insure a worthy future for herself, her son and her daughter, and even, perhaps — what a supreme revenge it would be! — to be of service to Napoleon, of whose departure to Elba she had just heard.

Her flighty mind was exalted. Who knew — some day she might be able to restore him to the King's favor. When she had provided for herself and her children she would see what she could do for him. She had never yet abandoned any one who was in trouble.



Last Love

THE HANDSOME EMPEROR OF RUSSIA
A WALK BY THE POND OF ST. CUCUFA
A ROSE AND A CUP OF COFFEE — AVOWAL OF LOVE
MASCULINE FATUITY

IN a green coat and silver-gray trousers, tall, and with a proud and youthful charm, Tsar Alexander came to meet Josephine.

"Madame," he said, bowing his powerful head, with its short, curly blond hair, "don't you think we might go to meet Queen Hortense? You see how fine it is!"

Through the wide open window of the drawing room Hortense and Eugene were to be seen, before the castle, talking animatedly with the Grand Duke of Baden and the Princes of Bavaria and Mecklenburg.

"Assuredly, Sire," said the Creole. "I'm a little worn out by this wretched cold I can't seem to get rid of, but I shall get the best of it. The air will be good for me. Shall we leave the young people to enjoy themselves? You haven't seen all of Malmaison yet. I want to show you my little pond of Saint Cucufa. Rousseau loved it for its solitude and its strange waters. I have built a chalet beside it — they'll bring us refreshments there."

They went out. Under the azure sky the park was

brilliant with all its trees newly in leaf. The May sun bathed the lawns in a golden light, brought out the new leaves of the bushes, set the waters of the little cascades to sparkling like diamonds.

Josephine, as they walked along, pointed out a flower to her guest, a rare plant, a familiar animal, in the distance. All at once she stopped before a rose bush. A bud was opening, allowing the promise of a pink heart to be seen. The Creole plucked it and gave it to the Tsar.

"Sire, will you accept this rose? It is the first of this year. You are entitled to it. I call it 'The Souvenir of Malmaison.'"

Alexander, pale with happiness, kissed the flower.

"Madame," he said, "these petals shall always lie close to my heart. Henceforth they will be as precious to me as the jewels of my crown."

Josephine, seeming not to hear him, embraced all her estate with a sweeping gesture, and said, in a deeply moved voice:

"Ah, Sire — when I think that I owe all this to you, that it is you who saved Malmaison from pillage, as you saved Paris, I feel that my heart can never discharge the debt of gratitude it owes you."

"I have done only what my duty required me to do, Madame — but, no doubt, it gave me the orders my heart enforced upon it, had you only known the truth."

"You are the noblest and most generous of princes, Sire. My children and I cannot keep count of all you have done for us."

"Please! Spare me, Madame — say no more about it. I sought only to repair the injuries caused to you by an ill fortune you did not deserve, but which has only in-

creased the respect in which you are held by every one. My dearest hope is that I may soon succeed completely in doing so."

"You have already done so much for my daughter!"

"The King has promised me that he will create the duchy of Saint-Leu for Queen Hortense, with a suitable endowment."

"I may say, Sire, between ourselves, that the Bourbons are treating us very well, thanks to you. It's true that I tried to do a great deal for them in the time of the Consulate. They may remember that. If Bonaparte had listened to me he would not be where he is to-day. But don't you think the King may still feel some bitterness toward my son?"

"Toward Prince Eugene? On the contrary, he esteems him highly for his pride and his noble spirit."

"Do you think, then, that he may confer the Constable's sword upon him, as some have suggested?"

"It would be a popular action, no doubt. At all events Prince Eugene may count upon a duchy, or a principality outside of France. As for you, Madame —"

"Oh, I —" said Josephine, modestly.

"You!" cried the Tsar, hotly. "I am ashamed when I think I have been able to get only Malmaison and Navarre for you! I wish I might offer you a throne, restore all your honors to you! You—who are, in my eyes the noblest and most deserving of women!"

He broke off, as if checked by a distressing thought. They were walking side by side under the branches, following the path that led to the pond. Alexander made a weary gesture.

"Everything must, however, be arranged quickly," he

said. "I feel that I cannot go away without being completely reassured as to your future."

"You are thinking already of leaving France?" Josephine cried, in alarm.

"I am expected in London, Madame. We kings, you know, are denied the privilege of having hearts. I shall go away — I shall not see you again, and you will forget me. I shall have nothing of you to take with me. But — yes, this rose, in place of a tender word —"

Moved, Josephine unfastened a cameo brooch from her dress and offered it to Alexander.

"Take this cameo, my friend," she said. "Keep it, in memory of me. The Pope gave it to me on the day of my coronation."

The Tsar took the jewel and murmured, sadly:

"The day of your coronation! No, Madame — I would rather have from you something more intimate, something less splendid, something that had belonged to you and been used by you. I'm ashamed to ask you — but you would overwhelm me with joy if you would give me a cup that has been raised to your lips —"

Josephine laughed merrily.

"A cup! You want a cup? How amusing! But you shall have it. You shall choose the cup you want — and my portrait shall be painted upon it."

"Madame, how good you are! How can one help loving you! Ever since I have been in France I have heard only blessings upon your name. How I pity Napoleon for not understanding that in separating from you he was losing all his favor with Providence!"

The Creole silenced him with a gesture.

"Forgive me," he said. "I was forgetting that he is

in adversity. Ah, Josephine, had you wished — if you could still — ”

She stopped his mouth with her hand. “Alexander — do you forget that I am an old woman — a grandmother?”

The ardor in the Tsar’s eyes showed how little that argument mattered to him.

His heightened color, his trembling lips, the restlessness of his fingers, proclaimed, with more eloquence than his words, his love for her. They looked at one another silently, he trembling with repressed ardor, she experiencing a strange joy in the supreme tribute he paid to her by showing that she could still arouse, in the heart of a handsome young man, so highly placed, emotion such as his, by virtue of the majestic grace of her body, the lure of her smile, the magic of her eyes. . . .

“Alexander after Cæsar — Alexander after Cæsar,” she whispered, savoring this fugitive moment, one of the most beautiful instants of her life, which, at last, let her feel that she was reëstablished, and avenged fittingly Napoleon’s disdain of her.

All at once she shivered, coughed, and drew her scarf closer about her.

“Are you cold, Josephine?” asked Alexander, anxiously.

“My throat is sore, my friend. I am tired. Shall we go back to the house?”

Overcome, feeling faint, she leaned upon the arm he offered her. He took her arm to help her, and felt that it was hot with fever. He smiled, his heart full of sudden hope, attributing, in his vanity, to the disturbance his words had caused his companion’s spirit, a fever due, in fact, to illness.



All Is Over

A FINAL CONSULTATION — ALL HOPE IS GONE — AGONY
HALLUCINATIONS — DEATH — NAPOLEON AT JOSEPHINE'S TOMB
THE STAR SETS

IN the small room outside her bedchamber Eugene and Hortense spoke to Doctor Horeau.

"Horeau!" said Eugene. "Tell us. Do you think there is any hope? Be frank — don't be afraid to tell us."

The doctor made a hopeless gesture.

"There would have to be a miracle. The fever has risen suddenly and become malignant. Now she is delirious. A few hours ago it was only a cold — now it is a severe infection. Her Majesty was rash — she insisted on getting up to receive Tsar Alexander and the princes."

"No use going into all that, Horeau! Attempt the impossible! She's our mother. Please — she's still young —"

"Your Highness may be assured that I have done everything in my power. I thought, for a little while, that the poultice I applied yesterday would do some good. But, alas, it was too late."

"My friend, don't be afraid to answer this — Do you think that if we sent for Corvisart he might be able to do something?"

"Send for him, by all means, your Highness!" said

the doctor. "He was my master — he taught me all I know. Then you would be satisfied. But the power of man stops where that of God begins."

Pale from lack of sleep Hortense took her brother's hand.

"You hear — Eugene?"

They could hear, through the half open door, the sound of stertorous breathing, which, at regular intervals, came to a climax in choking spells. In his helplessness Eugene clenched his fists, with the desperate anger of a soldier who knows himself to be losing to an invincible enemy.

"Horeau," he said, turning his head away, "I have sent for the Abbé Bertrand, and he has given her the last sacrament."

"You did well," sighed the doctor. "Now, if your Highnesses will permit me, I will go. I shall be back soon."

Brother and sister remained alone. Through the open window, grief-stricken and depressed, they looked at the flowered paths, the arbors covered with roses, all the fresh beauty of the park, full of life and sunlight at the height of this May morning — all seemed to mock them in their unhappiness. How dared death intrude upon this scene?

"Come, Hortense," said Eugene, in a dull voice.

They went into the room, hung to the ceiling with lilac cashmere — in which, under muslin curtains embroidered with gold, Josephine lay in her bed, her eyes closed, fighting against death. When she heard her children she opened her eyes, with an effort, looked at them, troubled, for a moment, tried to smile, and sank back into her stupor. Her chest heaving, her throat throbbing, she turned her

head from side to side on the pillows in her delirium, as if trying to escape this seizure that suffocated her, as if to escape from a wild beast that had leaped upon her and was sucking her life away, its teeth in her throat.

No! No! She did not want to die! In her increasingly rare moments of lucidity she struggled desperately. Where was she? Oh, yes, at Malmaison. Eugene and Hortense were with her. Why? Was she so ill? Ah, she remembered now. France had been invaded. Tsar Alexander . . . the return of the Bourbons . . . Napoleon beaten, proscribed. Napoleon? He was at Elba now. She remembered his last letter. What despair it had betrayed! How he must be suffering down there—alone, deserted by Marie Louise, parted from his son. And what was she doing here? Why wasn't she with him, to comfort him in his misfortune? Was she not still his wife, in spite of everything? When she recovered she would go to him—yes, she would go. . . .

"Mother!" said Hortense, touching her forehead, on which a cold perspiration lay. "Mother—can you hear me? It's I—your daughter—"

Not a sign of reply was there to Hortense's anxious entreaty. Josephine's hand lay inert under her daughter's. The Empress no longer had any knowledge of earthly things; ignoring the present, she was going from memories of the past to the blackness of oblivion.

Trivial memories, strange and remote, things she had supposed to be forgotten forever, came back to her with the precision of a picture. A "gaule" with blue flowers, made by Marion; the terror of an old priest, who, fearing the scaffold, had gone to pieces at the Carmelites in three days, like an old mummy; Mme. Tallien's left thigh, on

which the lover of a night had bitten his initials! Ah, how amusing that had been!

Borne into space on the bosom of a vast river, Josephine floated along under a dark sky. Ghosts without faces swam about her, neared her, withdrew, disappeared in the darkness. Some she recognized as they passed. Tercier . . . Beauharnais, holding his head in his hands, Hoche, with his beetling brow, Charles, prancing like an imp. Then, all at once, all those ghosts fled before a thin little man, badly dressed, with eyes like those of a bird of prey, who took her hand and bore her till she was breathless, amid thunder and lightning, toward a dazzling star, the radiation of which, none the less chilled her the more the nearer they came to it. . . .

The door was opened. Dr. Horeau came in. He approached the bed, looked at Josephine for a moment, then turned to Eugene, and, his lips bloodless, fumbling with his necktie, whispered:

"Your Highness, I fear, alas, that there is nothing more for me to do here."

Outside the sun reached its zenith, began to decline, and, suddenly, sent a great beam of light into the room.

Josephine no longer moved, except when her fingers plucked at the sheets. Strange visions came to her — of her islands, of the sea, of infinite space. A dazzling sky, the blue sea, the waving of palm trees, a warm and exuberant life. Trois Ilets, Martinique. Oh, miracle! Slowly that island moved, approached another, as gentle and as beautiful, with a harsh, sonorous, name: Corsica. One neared the other, attached itself to it, and, together, they set out, side by side, on the ocean. A storm assailed them, wrapped them in darkness, rent them asunder. Now the

tropical island sought its companion. Was that it, that poor and diminished land? What did they call that island, hardly larger than a paving stone? Corsica? No. Elba! And now that, too, disappeared, engulfed in its turn.

Now the journey was resumed, in space and infinity. Lost in a waste of waters, another unknown island appeared. It was deserted and lonely. Under a gloomy sky lay a suffering land. A furious surf beat night and day upon tortured rocks.

What unhappy island was that? On a cliff stood a man, his arms crossed, his eyes fixed upon space. Josephine could not see his face. His back was bowed. Who was this damned soul, imprisoned there, who, all alone, had waited, for months and years, for some unknown deliverance?

The Creole was eager to say a word of comfort to him, to throw him a gesture of pity and of tenderness. She could not. Her mouth was too dry for speech, her arms were frozen. . . .

Abruptly the man turned. Josephine stifled an exclamation. Empty eyes, sunken cheeks, a death's-head. As she approached its face took on the semblance of humanity. Its eyes filled with light, flesh appeared on his cheek bones, a black bang fell on his forehead.

Raving, her eyes haggard, Josephine rose in her bed, and, with a terrified gesture, tried to banish that frightful vision. No! No! It was impossible! But—the man she recognized was Napoleon!

"It's all over," whispered Eugene, touching his forehead with an agonized hand. Lying across the bed, Hortense, with her arms flung protectingly about her mother's

body, in a final supreme gesture of defiance, burst into tears.

He had arrived, the day before yesterday, at the Tuileries, whence the Bourbons, alarmed by his return from Elba, had fled.

In spite of the appalling task that lay before him, of reorganizing the army and rallying the country, in spite of all the duties which the critical situation imposed upon him with a remorseless urgency, so that his nights as well as his days were occupied, Napoleon had hurried to Malmaison at the first possible moment.

Alone, taking no one with him, he had passed through the rooms in which she had lived, like one seeking a phantom. She had had her being here, here she had so often smiled at him, here they had loved one another. Might he not, suddenly, see her face in a mirror? Might not the very walls, pitying him, echo the sound of her voice?

He had stayed for a long time in the room in which she had died. One by one he had regarded the objects which her last breaths had made sacred. Her favorite chair, the tapestry screen, with its unfinished piece of work, the bowl, decorated with mauve flowers, from which she had drunk for the last time. . . .

His eyes heavy with tears, he went out, crossed the garden, passed through the gate. His hands behind his back, his forehead bowed, it was as if he sought to find in the dust of the road the wheel tracks of her funeral procession. The Imperial Russian Guard had headed the escort that had accompanied her to her last resting place. Napoleon followed the road that led to the church of Rueil.

A fine March afternoon bathed houses and gardens in

the spring sunshine. Pigeons rested on slate roofs as blue as the sky. The hedges seemed already green with their new foliage. The air was brisk and bore the scent of coming flowers.

Napoleon entered the obscure church, the darkness of which seemed to fall upon him like an evil omen. Slowly he reached the vault in which Josephine had been buried. For a long time, with a heavy heart, he looked at her tomb.

So — she had lain here for nearly a year, she who stood for the years of his glory, his self-confidence, the glorious days of his youth!

He touched the tombstone and, shivering, withdrew his hand as at the touch of a cold, dead body.

His memories possessed him. How good she had been! Good to her family, to her servants, to her pets, grateful for the slightest service any one did her, full of pity for the weak and the unfortunate. How much of her life she had spent in seeking help and favors for others, how often she had used her tears to save the lives of those condemned to death!

How full of grace her least gesture had been! How sweet and gentle she had always been! How infinite had been her charm, against which the strongest heart had been defenseless! She had known so well how to support him, to make him beloved of the people, to win the greatest devotion for him. Had he not always been successful while he remained true to her? If he had kept her beside him, would he have been hurled from his throne? It was not she, after all, who had abandoned him when he was unfortunate. She would have come to him at Elba, to restore the hope he needed to make him believe again in

his destiny. Ah, why had he left her? Why had he, of his own free will, extinguished the light of his star?

Was it really true? Those eyes, the mouth that had taught him love, were there, in the darkness, under this stone; the body he had embraced with so much passion in the divine pride of its possession was dissolving, little by little, into nothingness. Was there nothing left, then, of all that had inspired him with courage, given him his power?

What was to become of him? The treasury was empty, the army was disorganized and had lost its spirit, the country no longer believed in him. He was no longer the master of victory, but a man who had already bitten the dust. Europe was reassembling its armies to array itself against him for the last time. He was alone! Where were Marie-Louise and his son, the King of Rome? Would he ever see them again?

Overcome with grief, he fell on his knees.

"Josephine! You were right!" he sobbed. "The Austrian brought me misery. Forgive me for the harm I did you! Ah, but why did they let you die? If I had you beside me I would be invincible again! Josephine—my wife! I understand at last—why must it be too late? I never loved any other woman—I should never have loved any other!"

He rose, with difficulty, climbed the damp steps, passed again through the church, and pushed open its heavy door. On the threshold he paused, and, as if to rid himself of the burden that weighed them down, shrugged his shoulders.

"No! No!" he said, through his clenched teeth. "I will fight—I will win! I must!"

He rose to his full height. His steely eyes, in the evening light, swept the sky, seeking the sun, and, his pupils dilated, unwinking, he stared into the sun with disregard of its dazzling strength.

But the horizon was empty. In the East, opposite the setting sun, Napoleon's star disappeared in its turn, swallowed up by the night.

THE END

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